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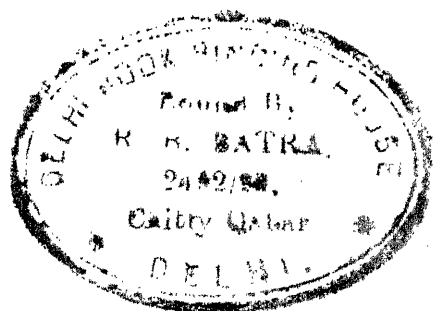
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MAN IN INDIA

Edited by

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VERRIER ELWIN

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*A Quarterly Record of Anthropological
Science with Special Reference to India*

Founded by SARAT CHANDRA ROY

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By J. H. Hutton

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MAN IN INDIA

Vol. XXVI]

March 1946

[No. 1]

COMMENT

AN AGRICULTURE NUMBER

THE attention that has been paid to agriculture in Indian anthropological literature is hardly commensurate with its importance as the main basis of the economy of most aboriginal populations. Detailed studies of the agricultural methods of any tribe or group of tribes are few, and many monographs contain only scanty references as to crops, systems of tillage and agricultural implements. There are no doubt exceptions, such as H. N. C. Stevenson's *The Economy of the Central Chin Hills* (Bombay, 1943), S. D. Pant's *The Social Economy of the Himalayas* (London, 1935) and several of the Assam monographs, but in general the technological and economic aspects of cultivation have been described with far less accuracy than the rites and ceremonies that accompany the various stages in the agricultural cycle. This one-sided emphasis on the magico-religious superstructure and the neglect of the material realities of food production are most noticeable in the Provincial *Castes and Tribes* series, but has found expression also in the choice of subject discussed in contemporary anthropological periodicals.

What is the explanation for this gap in our knowledge of so vital a part of tribal economics? Agricultural activities are not particularly difficult to observe, but it may well be that many authors of Indian anthropological works, for years familiar with their particular field of study, take the local methods of tillage for granted and fail to realize how greatly agricultural technique varies from tribe to tribe and area to area, and how important a light such variations may shed on the cultural affinities of aboriginal populations.

572.05

M. J.

It is to be hoped that the present number of *Man in India* devoted to the study of indigenous agriculture, will stimulate observers in various parts of the country to put on record whatever they may know of the agricultural and horticultural practices of the local aborigines. Even brief communications on these subjects to the Notes and Queries section will help to pool our knowledge and build up the stock of information indispensable for any comprehensive treatise on indigenous Indian agriculture.

Today the anthropologist who attempted such a treatise would be faced with almost insuperable difficulties. From the existing ethnographical, archaeological and historical data the development of Indian agriculture does not emerge even in broad outlines, and we have indeed hardly come to the stage where the problems are clearly stated. The old classification of the aboriginal populations into food gatherers, shifting cultivators and plough cultivators corresponds in no way to the great diversity of economic systems found among India's more primitive folks, and only by evolving new criteria and paying far greater attention to the details of agricultural technique will we be able to arrange the observations of field workers in scientific order.

This is not the place to enumerate the many unsolved problems that baffle the student of Indian tribal agriculture, but a few queries on important points may indicate promising lines of investigation. The problem of the transition from food gathering to food production has always exercised the minds of historians and anthropologists. Can we discern in India a stage or stages in this process of transition? Some of the forest tribes of Peninsular India, such as the Chenchus of the Deccan and the Hill Pantarams of Travancore, subsist mainly by plant collecting and hunting, but cultivate also on a small scale and with very primitive implements. It would seem that their main agricultural instrument is the digging-stick, and that many of their crops are dibbled. Is this primi-

tive form of plant growing indigenous among these semi-nomadic tribes, or did it originate through contacts with slightly more advanced populations? To answer this question we require more information on the methods of tillage and the selection of crops in these as well as other areas inhabited by tribes on a similar level of culture. Which of these tribes cultivate only in existing clearings like the Chenchus, and which practice a kind of *jhum*-cultivation? Do some tribes dibble their crops or is broadcasting the more common method of sowing? Among which tribes is the digging-stick the only agricultural implement, and which tribes use both digging-stick and hoe? The important distinction between digging-stick cultivation and hoe cultivation has largely been veiled in India by the common practice of describing both as 'shifting-cultivation.' Though the shifting of fields in a definite cycle of rotation is common to both systems, there is a vast technological difference, as well as no doubt a cultural distinction, between the way a Reddi dabbles sorghum in practically unprepared soil, and a Bondo or Naga broadcasts small millet or rice on a field well dug over with heavy hoes. In the Eastern Ghats I have found that the dividing line between hoe and digging-stick cultivation runs somewhat to the north of the Godavari gorge,¹ the Reddis to the south of that line using only digging-sticks and the Austroasiatic speaking tribes to the north cultivating with hoes. But from other parts of India information on the relative distribution of digging-stick and hoe cultivation is still missing, and it was only recently that I discovered the prevalence of digging-stick cultivation—though of a more advanced type than that of the Deccan—in the Dafla and Miri Hills of the North-East Frontier, an area where few would have expected to find so ancient a method of tillage.

Another problem of historical, cultural and economic importance is the association of some of India's

¹ Cf. C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Reddis of the Bison Hills* (London 1945), pp. 84, 334.

oldest civilizations with rice-cultivation on irrigated terraces. *Prima facie* there seems to be a good case for connecting this form of cultivation with folk of Austric languages, not only in India, but also in the greater part of the Southeast-asiatic sphere. Similarities in the vocabulary relating to irrigated fields in the languages of such widely separated Austroasiatic speaking tribes as the Gadabas of Koraput and the Mundas of Chota Nagpur seem to indicate that wet rice cultivation was known to the western group of Austroasiatic tribes at least as early as the dispersal in Peninsular India. But the fact that other Austroasiatic speaking tribes, such as the Khasis of Assam, did not until recently construct irrigated rice terraces, seems to throw some doubt on this hypothesis. An inquiry into the agricultural terminology of Austroasiatic languages—as well as the languages of certain Tibetoburman speaking tribes with a developed technique of irrigation such as Angami Nagas and Apa Tanis—may provide valuable evidence for or against such an association of Austric civilization and wet rice cultivation. Such an inquiry can be done only by trained linguists, but every anthropologically minded observer can help to elucidate the problem by recording in detail the agricultural methods of aboriginal tribes familiar with the cultivation of rice on irrigated terraces.

A more general problem is focussed in the question whether the agricultural methods of India's tribal folks are mainly determined by environmental factors or whether the various tribal folks, migrating into an as yet sparsely populated sub-continent, selected habitats suitable to their traditional system of tillage. Despite a certain blending of cultures there are areas where two and more tribes with widely differing methods of agriculture co-exist in the same environment, each utilizing distinct features of the landscape. Tradition is in such cases a more determinant factor than environment, but a great many more concrete instances will have to be collected and investigated before Indian anthropology can make any substantial

contribution to the problem environment versus cultural tradition.

Little is as yet known of the distribution of grains and plants cultivated by the tribal folks of India. The areas of dry rice cultivation on hill slopes, the survival of taro growing in widely separated parts of the country, and the regions where primitive jungle folks harvest wild grass and self-sown grain deserve analysis and collation. The association of distinctive methods of sowing with certain varieties of grain suggests another line of enquiry which may lead to significant results.

Close observation of the traditional agricultural methods has not only academic value, but is the *condition sine qua non* for the success of any measures for improving tribal economy. If we want to assist the tribesmen in increasing the efficiency of their methods of food production, we must not ignore the knowledge gained by centuries of conscious and unconscious experiment. The technique developed by such expert agriculturists as Apa Tanis and Angami Nagas is ideally suited to local conditions and can serve as a model for the development of agriculture among less advanced tribes of the neighbourhood. Terrace cultivation, for instance, is the best safeguard against erosion and progressive soil-exhaustion, and its introduction among the *jhum*-cultivating Sema Nagas with the help of Angami instructors has greatly relieved the pressure on the land in the over populated Sema country. Similarly the agricultural methods of the Apa Tanis, described in this issue, have to some extent been copied by nearby Daflas, and could, if adapted to local conditions, result in a considerable increase of food production among other tribes of the Subansiri area.

During this year's session of the Indian Science Congress Dr Mortimer Wheeler has deplored the lack of coherent archaeological and anthropological research in this country. Conscious co-operation among field workers is needed also in the study of such individual subjects such as primitive agriculture.

CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

SANTAL TRANSPLANTATION SONGS

I

Wealth, wealth
O mother wealth
Where was your birth ?
I was born
In the soil
I was born
In the splash of rain.

II

Wealth, wealth
Where is your mother
Where is your father ?
My mother and father
Are wind and rain
My milk is water trickling.

III

Paddy, for so long we kept you.
In a big house
We reared you
Now you are going out
To a fine field
We shall scatter you
Paddy.

IV

In Jeth the wind
Is coming with the rain
Where are you, headman ?
Bring the two bullocks
Put the red one to the yoke
And we will plough
The field below the palm tree.

V

In our fields
In our lands
Is a house of wealth.

VI

The paddy is weeping
The paddy is asking
When will be my wedding ?
When the water of the sky
Drenches the earth
Then will be your wedding.

VII

Lukhi, Lukhi
You have come from the house
Where will you stay?
Mud is my dwelling
Rivers are my parents
Water is my milk.

VIII

Put on your clothes, girl
And comb your hair
Let us go
To the house in the fields.

IX

My lover sits by the river
Give me the fishes
O my lover
If there is any love in you
I will cook the fishes for you.¹

W. G. ARCHER

¹ Originals at 3503, 3505, 3508, 3511, 3526, 3529, 3530, 3535, 3616; G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Don Seven* (Dumka, 1943).

A BRIEF NOTE ON AGRICULTURE IN THE DIRANG DZONG AREA

By J. P. MILLS

GENERAL

THIS note is based on observations and enquiries made during a brief visit in the latter half of May, 1945 and additional information supplied by Mr Imdad Ali, I.P., Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract, who later visited villages I was unable to reach. It is by no means exhaustive, and certain aspects which might be of great importance for agricultural experiments elsewhere in the hills of Assam call for more expert examination. The most important are the superlatively fine local cattle, the handy light plough, and the use of oak leaves as a fertilizer.

Dirang Dzong is the most important of a small group of 9 or 10 villages inhabited by people who call themselves Grangmarangpa, but are usually included under the general term of Monba. They claim a Tibetan origin and their culture is largely Tibetan. The floor of the valley they inhabit is about 5,500 feet above sea level, and the ranges to the North and South run up to 10,000 feet and over. The climate is cool, but it is rarely that the winter snow line descends to the valley floor. No records have yet been made of the rainfall, but it is certainly far lighter than that of the plains. The main river, the Digien, and the side streams are very fast flowing, but excellent cantilever bridges give human beings and livestock easy access to all fields at all times of the year.

TYPES OF FIELDS

Little use is made of the flats along the river, as the soil is sandy and they are liable to occasional flood. Almost all the cultivation is on the gentler slopes near the base of the hills, where the soil is a rich loam. Almost all the fields are permanent, only the very poorest practising the system of shifting cultivation known in Assam as 'jhuming', and there is a tendency to convert 'jhum' into permanent fields whenever possible. The slopes are roughly terraced to check erosion, each field descending to a steep bank faced with stone. The average field is on a moderate slope, but wherever possible level terraces are made and irrigated for rice. Double cropping of permanent fields is normal.

THE PLOUGH

Except on steep jhums contour ploughing is universal. Two men are required to handle a plough. The plough is light and made entirely of wood. The wooden blade requires frequent renewal and is therefore detachable. A 'dao' is the only tool required to make a new one, which is wedged into the base of the plough exactly after the manner of the blade of a carpenter's plane. Both the pole and yoke are long and light. One man guides the plough while the other both steers and assists the cattle from a position in the middle of the yoke alongside the pole.

THE USE OF OAK LEAVES

Double cropping is only made possible by the extensive use of the leaves of a large-leaved variety of oak (*boinang shing*) common also in the Khasi Hills and other parts of Assam. Large forests of this tree are carefully preserved, acorns being planted where trees are thin. The leaves are collected in the spring and stacked in large heaps on the edges of the fields. When the first rain has made them thoroughly sodden they are ready for use.

MAIN CROPS

Wheat and barley (*grinding* or *grunchun*) are sown in November. The land is ploughed, and the seed sown broadcast and ploughed in. The harvest is in late May and June. The mode of reaping preferred is the most extraordinary I have ever heard of. The field is fired! The object of this is to burn off the awns, which make threshing difficult. The main stalk is only partially burnt, but the neck is burnt through and the ear falls to the ground, from which it is gathered. If the weather is bad the ears are usually picked by hand, sickles being apparently fairly uncommon. They then have to be spread out, dried, and singed to get rid of the awns. After harvest the half-burnt straw is pulled up by the roots and again burnt and ploughed in. The field is then ready for maize. Wheat and barley are never sown on 'jhum'.

A curious thing is that a small quantity of oats comes up with the wheat. It is not regarded as a food grain and is weeded out as far as possible. But it ripens before the wheat and enough grains fall to ensure it coming up again the next year. No one knows where the seed originally came from.

Maize (*pheritang*) is sown broadcast as soon as the field is ready, and ploughed in. When two or three leaves appear a thick layer of oak leaves is raked over it. In fields near villages I have seen farmyard manure also piled on the maize fields in neat, well-spaced heaps, exactly as in England. After the maize crops in the autumn the fields are again ploughed for wheat or barley. No use is made of maize stalks. There is no rotation of crops and a field is never left fallow.

On fields not used for wheat or barley, maize is sown much earlier. On fields which I saw it was about 8 inches high and the oak leaves had been on the ground some time. This early crop is followed by ordinary buckwheat (*grinching*) or a small variety known as *brasma*. On 'jhum' where the soil is good maize is sown the first and second years. On poorer land *brasma* is sown the second year. The 'jhum' is then left fallow for from 6 to 8 years.

Millet (*kongpu*) is the main 'jhum' crop where the soil is poor but is not very common in permanent fields. When permanent fields are put under millet it is sown in June and reaped in October, and is never followed by another crop, as it is thought

to exhaust the soil. Apparently oak leaves are not used on millet fields.

On 'jhum' millet is sown the first year and *brasma* the second.

Rice seedlings were well up by the latter half of May. The land is ploughed and they are transplanted about the middle of June. Rice is greatly appreciated as a food, but it is only grown on irrigated land, and land suitable for irrigation is scarce. Probably some of the double-cropped wheat fields could be levelled and converted, but if they were they would only carry one crop instead of two.

CATTLE

The cattle are far and away the finest I have ever seen in Assam. The animal is a hybrid of mithan (*bos frontalis*) and something else, and the best animals are typical mithan to look at, except that they never seem to have white 'stockings'. What the other strain is remains to be discovered. One informant told me it was *dzoz* (yak-cattle hybrid), but this I doubt. Breeding is all towards the mithan type, bulls which most closely resemble mithan being selected, and the rest castrated. Pure mithan bulls are also used, being obtained by a special trade described in the next paragraph.

The animals ordinarily browse on jungle, making it unnecessary to burn hill sides for grazing with the consequent erosion. They will graze on patches of grass on slopes, though their necks are too short to get down to the grass on level ground unless it is very long. They are exceedingly tractable and both bulls and bullocks are used for ploughing. The milk is rich, and is all converted into butter and cheese. A cow is milked in the morning only, so that the calf gets its full share. A good animal will give 4 or 5 seers a day. The local cattle are only slaughtered for meat when they are very old.

Sheep are kept for wool only. When I was there all the flocks were away on the high pastures and I only saw a few rams which had been brought down for sale. They had exceptionally fine horns, and I suspect there is a strain of some species of wild sheep.

CATTLE TRADE

An interesting trade in cattle plays such an important part in the system of breeding that it deserves a brief description. Bhutan borders the Monba country to the West. Immediately to the East of the Monbas is the Lamai (Miji) tribe, and to the East of them are the Daflas. Bhutan has a surplus of ordinary cattle and wants bull mithan for breeding; the Daflas have a surplus of mithan and want ordinary cattle for meat. There is therefore a constant movement of bull mithan from East to West, and of ordinary cattle from West to East. A Lamai buys a young bull mithan in the Dafla country for 2 or 3 head of ordinary cattle, which he has acquired by the reverse trade. He passes on the mithan to the Monbas for 5 or 6 head of cattle. For some reason breeding from pure mithan is believed to be difficult in the Dirang

Dzong area. The bull would therefore be passed on to Bhutan for a good price in hybrids and ordinary cattle, some of the latter being killed for meat, and the others bartered with the Lamai for mithan bulls.

YAKS AND THEIR HYBRIDS

Yaks are kept only on the very high ground to the North. All but a very few of the bulls are castrated and used for transport, but all cow yaks are kept and many of them crossed with a type of cattle known as *glang*, the result being a *dzoz*. Mr Imdad Ali, to whom I am indebted for all the information contained in this paragraph and much in the rest of the note, describes a *glang* as a smallish animal somewhat like a half-grown buffalo in appearance. A bull *glang* fetches a higher price than a bull yak or mithan. Bull *dzoz* are never kept for breeding; they are invariably either killed for meat or castrated for use as transport animals. Cow *dzoz* are crossed with either *glang* or yak, but their calves are never allowed to live; they are killed at about a fortnight old to ensure the maximum yield of milk, which is said to be highest of any type of cattle known to these tribes. The above is only the merest sketch of a system of animal husbandry which would clearly repay closer study.

SABAI CULTIVATION IN THE RAJMAHAL HILLS

BY W. G. ARCHER

I

INTRODUCTION

OF the wild grasses which flourish on the hills and uplands of the Santal Parganas, sabai grass (*Ischaemum angustifolium*) is at once the most beautiful and valuable. Its delicate fibres make it an ideal raw material for the finer grades of paper while its shaggy clumps with their wispy stalks cause the hillsides to look as if they were clothed in a soft blanket of hair.

This resemblance to wild tresses has impressed almost every tribe and C. H. Bompas in *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* records two folk tales which actually ascribe the origin of sabai to human hair. In a Santal version, seven brothers are advised by a jogi that unless they sacrifice their sister, their new tank will always remain dry. The girl enters the dry tank, water issues from it and the girl is drowned. Later the girl is brought to life, marries and goes to her husband's house. Her brothers become poor and go to her for help. When their sister has fed them, she says, 'Now brothers you come running to me for food, and yet you sacrificed me in the tank.' Then they were overwhelmed with shame, they looked down at the earth, and the earth split open and they all ran into the chasm. The sister tried to catch the youngest brother by the hair and pull him out, calling, 'Come back, brother come back brother, you shall carry my baby about for me !' but his hair came off in her hand and the earth swallowed them all up. Their sister planted the hair in a corner of the garden and it is said that from that human hair, sabai grass originated.¹

In a Ho version, 'there were six brothers who lived with their sister. The brothers used to spend their days in the jungle hunting while the sister minded the house and cooked the dinner against their return.

'One day while the brothers were hunting the girl went to cut herbs to cook with the dinner; as she was doing so she chanced to cut her finger and some drops of blood fell on the herbs, which were put in the pot. When the brothers came home to dinner they noticed how very sweet the food was and asked the reason. The girl said that she was afraid that it must be because some drops of her blood had fallen on it. Then the brothers took counsel together and agreed that if a few drops of her blood were so sweet, she must be very nice to eat. So they agreed to murder her and eat her. But the youngest brother named Lita, though he did not dare to oppose his elders, was sorry for the decision. The next day when the brothers came from the jungle they brought with them a beautiful flower of seven colours and gave it to their sister. She was delighted with it, she had never seen so beautiful a flower

¹ C. H. Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London, 1909), p. 106.

before and wanted to know where it grew and whether there were others like it. They said that if she liked to come with them they would take her to the tree on which the flowers grew and she could pick as many as she liked. So the next morning she gladly went with them and they took her to the tree with the seven coloured flowers. She climbed the tree to pick the flowers and when she was up in the tree they shot arrows at her to kill her; but though they shot many arrows they could not kill her. Then they compelled Lita to shoot and he with his first arrow killed his sister.

Then they cut up the body of the girl ready for cooking and sent Lita to a well to fetch water in which to cook the flesh. Lita went to the well and overcome with sorrow sat down and wept. As he wept a large frog came to the surface of the water and asked him what was the matter; he said that he had been made to kill his sister and that now they were going to cook her flesh. The frog told him to be comforted and gave him a large *rohu* fish. Lita took this back and when his brothers told him to cook the food, he hid the pieces of his sister's body and cooked the *rohu* fish. The brothers ate this thinking that it was their sister. Then they went on into the jungle hunting. After going a short way Lita said that he had forgotten to recover his arrow and that he must go back and fetch it. He went back to the place and taking his sister's body buried it and building a hut near, spent the days in weeping over the grave. After he had spent some time thus the girl appeared alive out of the ground. Lita was over-joyed and he and his sister remained happily in the jungle.

One day a Raja hunting in the jungle passed that way and seeing the girl at once fell in love with her and took her away and married her. Lita he also took with him and made him ruler of half the kingdom.

In honour of his marriage the Raja resolved to construct an enormous tank and people came from far and near to work at it. Among others came Lita's five elder brothers, who had fallen into great poverty, owing to their wickedness. When their sister saw them she forgave them and sending for them bestowed on them food and clothing. But they were so ashamed and repentant that they could only kneel on the ground and beat the earth with their hands. As they continued to do so the earth opened and swallowed them up; only their hair stuck out of the ground and that became sabai grass, and this was the origin of all the sabai grass which exists.¹

Similar stories have been recorded among the Uraons and Bihors and Verrier Elwin in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* has drawn attention to some significant parallels².

At the present time, in the Santal Parganas, sabai grass is cultivated only in the Rajmahal Hills and a portion of Pakaur but in

¹ Bompas, op. cit., p. 466-7.

² Verrier Elwin, *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* (Bombay, 1944), pp. 367-9.

the former area it is not only grown on a large scale but is the mainstay of Sauria Paharia villages. Since this is perhaps the only area in Eastern India in which the cultivation of grass is the staple element in agriculture, I propose to record a few notes on sabai based on a tour of the Rajmahal Hills in January 1943. This tour lasted for four days and during this time I covered 43 miles on foot, inspected sabai depots at Mandro, Mahadeoganj and Sahibganj, saw many sabai fields and visited 16 Paharia villages.¹

II

THE CULTIVATION OF SABAI

The principles of sabai cultivation are given in a monograph by D. N. Mukherji on *Paper and Papier Mache in Bengal*, part of which is summarized in the *Santal Parganas District Gazetteer* and it will give the necessary background of theory if I first quote his account of the cultivation process.

The hill sides are thoroughly cleared in the dry season by felling and burning, and the seed is scattered broadcast in the rains without preparatory ploughing or spading. As the jungle comes up again, two weedings are given. In the first year the grass grows to a height of 12 or 18 inches, but this first year's growth is of no value and is not cut. In the second year the fields again receive two weedings, and the grass grows three feet high. It is now used to some extent both for paper and rope-making, but it is still weak, and it is not till the third year that it attains its maturity, becoming strong and growing six to seven feet high. From now onwards the fields receive only one principal weeding every year in July and August for nothing ought to remain in the fields but sabai, whether trees, scrub jungle or other kinds of grass. Beyond this annual weeding the fields receive no attention.

The grass is cut only once a year at anytime from the end of October to the end of January. Every year, after it has been cut, the fields are burnt in the dry season; after this when the rainy season sets in, the grass shoots up to a height of six or seven feet in about a couple of months. The outturn varies somewhat, but about 25 maunds may be taken as the average per bigha or 74 maunds per acre. A sabai plantation has a long life, many fields being quite fifty years old, in fact, once established the grass takes such a hold of the land as to defy eradication. The outturn, however, continues to be good for 15 or 16 years only and then gradually falls off. When the yield becomes so small as to be no longer worth troubling about the field is abandoned; and it is only when, in the course of time, want of weeding allows jungle to re-establish itself that the sabai dies off and a fresh plantation become possible.²

¹ Sahara, Raksi, Dubigoda, Amra, Kerigoda, Deopahar, Champa, Naujacha, Goda, Gogi, Panchgarh, Panchrukhi, Serga, Kulbhanga, Medo and Gagoni.

² L. S. S. O'Malley, *Bihar District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, Second Edition by S. C. Mukharji (Patna, 1938), p. 273.

This account represents an ideal arrangement and pre-supposes a steady market for sabai grass. This market is at present secured for the Paharias by the mass purchase of all their grass by the Titagarh Paper Mills, Calcutta, and it is the existence of this guaranteed market which has both stimulated sabai cultivation in the Rajmahal Hills and given it its peculiar features.

But besides a market, the process also assumes expert weeding; and it is the reluctance of most Paharias to do this weeding which has led to the strange position that Sabai cultivation is less a form of cultivation *by* Paharias than a form of cultivation *for* them. Although the grass is of vital importance to the tribe, they are for the most part content to act as merely technical or passive owners and the cultivation is at present done by a loose collaboration with three other groups.

The first of these parties are Santals who do the bulk of the weeding and harvesting. The second are petty Mahajans who organize the process employ the Santals and after weighing and baling the grass at the depots despatch it to the Mills at Calcutta. The third party is the Titagarh Mill itself. Until 1943, although this Mill was the ultimate purchaser, it was, as it were, an absentee shareholder and its direct contact with the area was slight. In 1943, however, it posted a local representative at Sahibganj, organised its own staff of inspectors and took over the majority of the mahajans as its own agents. The mahajans, therefore, instead of being comparable to petty traders are now much more akin to small contractors. Prior to 1943, the Mill had no direct contact with the Paharias and it is only since 1942 that Titagarh has become a name to them. It is as a result of fairly fluid co-operation between these three parties and the Paharias that sabai cultivation is proceeding.

The basis of this co-operation is almost entirely personal and it is because almost all the parties trust each other that cultivation is being done at all. This is in many ways an astonishing position and until I had been through the hills I had no idea of the extent to which it was the case. It is not, however, untypical of primitive industry and I will illustrate briefly the ways in which this mutual trust is assumed.

I have already mentioned the fact that in the greater part of the area the harvesting is done by Santals. These Santals walk up to the hills every day from villages which may be as much as five miles away. If they are men, they cut as much grass as can be made up into two big bundles and carried on the two ends of a sharply pointed pole. If they are women, they cut enough grass to make a large headload. The greater part of the cutting is done without supervision either by the Paharia or the agent. When the day's cutting is finished the Santal labourers carry the grass down to the depot and stand the bundles up on end. The bundles are either weighed the same evening or the next morning.

Each bundle has a private mark on it in the form of a special knot, a twig or a leaf by which each Santal can tell his own bundle from the bundles of others. The bundles are then weighed and the Santal labourer is paid for the harvesting according to weight. When a bundle has been weighed it is laid down on its side. This simple way of work which could be upset at almost any stage if there was any wish to do so has now been working satisfactorily for many years.

When the first weighment has been made the Santal puts the bundle in a heap along with other bundles relating to his Paharia and once or twice in the month the Paharia owner comes down with his Santal labourers and the bundles are re-weighed in his presence. This second weighment provides the data on which both the price of the grass is paid to the Paharia and the royalty to Government is calculated. The most noteworthy point, however, is that between the cutting of the grass by the labourer and its weighment in the presence of the Paharias a gap of at least a fortnight intervenes and it is only the confidence of the Paharias in the Santal labourers which enables him to accept the weighment at the depot as a weighment of his grass. Similarly it is only the confidence of the Santal labourers that their grass bundles will not be tampered with that enables grass to be left unwatched at the depot for days on end. However much the Paharias may dislike intruders on their hills and however much they may complain of the mahajans there is no doubt that a personal bond of friendship exists between the agents, the Paharias and the Santals and only as a result of these trusting relations is the work carried on.

A final point which demonstrates this element of trust is the arrangement for despatch. Until 1943, one of the more important duties of the mahajans was to despatch the sabai grass after harvest to the Titagarh Paper Mills at Calcutta, and one of their duties as agents is still to despatch the grass to Calcutta. Moreover, their remuneration as agents is still calculated in terms of the actual output and while the price of the grass to the Paharias is calculated on the grass actually brought to the depot, the harvesting and despatching charges of the agent are calculated on the grass actually received by the Mill at Calcutta. The weighment of the grass at Calcutta is not made in the presence of any representatives of the former mahajans and all the agents accept the Mill's figures without question. This final and most important stage of the operation, therefore, is being conducted on the basis of simple trust between the agents and the Mill.

At first sight, this organization of the industry seems primitive in the extreme but after discussing it with some agents and the company's representatives, I was convinced that it was working so well that no major changes were desirable. Since, however, different payments were being made as a result of different weighments by different persons, I suggested that a seasonal

or if possible a monthly cross check between the weighments should be made.

This flimsy organization of the industry is obviously due more to accident than to design and the same absence of planning is evident in other directions also. On most hill sides sabai is growing but in almost all cases it is mixed in with various forms of thatching grass and small jungle. In better fields, the proportion of sabai grass may be fairly high and on certain hills close to Sahibganj the hill sides are almost completely covered with sabai. In other hills, however, such as Kaumadari and Dolpahar other grass is much more prevalent and the sabai consists of small colonies strung out through a red expanse of thatching grass. It is quite evident from the appearance of many hill sides that the out-turn of sabai could be doubled if not trebled provided a long term plan could be executed. At present, however, the acreage under sabai is fluid and there has so far been little attempt to increase the sabai ratio. The first step towards an improvement of the industry is a more accurate demarcation of the fields, an allocation of new areas for development into sabai and finally a planned attempt to eliminate the natural competitors of sabai and thus raise the out-turn.

The same lack of planning is evident in the methods which are used for weeding. *Palamahri* which is the first item in the weeding process consists of cutting shrubs and saplings while *kamauni* or the second stage consists of cutting any foreign grass. It is significant, however, that the process is one of cutting and not of uprooting. The upshot, therefore, is that the sabai is given space in which to grow but the shrubs and grasses are not destroyed and in fact they again grow up as the year goes on. It is obvious that the cost of uprooting and finally eliminating grass and shrubs is much greater than that of merely cutting them down and until there is some long term stability in the industry it is obvious that this extra cost may scarcely be worthwhile. At the same time, unless the method of weeding is changed it is difficult to see how the sabai ratios can be improved.

In a similar way, arrangements for labour, transport and the depots are inadequate. Up to the present, depots have sprung up more or less according to where the mahajan agents have been living and there has been no systematic allocation of hills to mahajans or a grouping of hills in relation to depots. I found for example that Bande hill which is only 3 miles from Banjhi is weeded and harvested by Santals who come from villages more than 6 miles away and have to carry the sabai 10 miles to the depot at Mandro. A fresh depot at Banjhi would have been much more convenient but as all the hills between Mandro and Banjhi are operated by mahajans from Mandro, the Mahajans do not want a depot there and because of this no depot has been opened. Similarly, labour and transport are so far limited to what is available locally. As

a result, both the weeding and harvesting do not proceed as rapidly as they might and despatching which should go on side by side with the harvesting also tends to lag behind. It was estimated that owing to shortage of labour only 40% of the sabai acreage was weeded in 1943 while the total number of bullock carts which could take sabai from the Banjhi area to the railhead at Sahibganj was only 14. It is obvious that if there is to be any improvement in production, gangs of seasonal labour from other parts of the district will have to be introduced and more bullock carts or a fleet of trucks will also be needed. Unless action is taken on these lines any attempt at increasing the output will fail from shortage of labour and transport.

III

THE TRIBAL ATTITUDE TO SABAI CULTIVATION

Against this background, the attitude of the Paharias to the sabai industry is somewhat complicated. Many of them realise that their freedom from want depends on the steady income they receive from sabai. At the same time, their attachment to the hills is so great that any alien insertion perturbs them. 'All we want,' some of them said to me, 'is to live on our hills.' For this reason they regard the mahajan more as an unnecessary pest than as an agent of welfare. They see the mahajans organizing their slopes for them, sending in their labourers and drawing more money from the Mill for weeding and harvesting than they themselves get from the grass. They forget that the mahajan has his expenses and that his profits are not large and they only feel that sabai is being grown not for themselves but for the mahajan. At Deopahar, I asked the Paharias why they did not reduce the great area under thatching grass and plant more sabai instead. They replied, 'We get nothing from our sabai. Why should we grow it? It is only the mahajans who gain. They take everything.' In certain hills close to Sahibganj, Paharias themselves are organising the business and employing labour for weeding and harvesting and even despatching sabai direct to the Mill. As a result, the Mahadeoganj depot which is run by a Paharia, Madhu Manjhi, was full of sabai in January 1943 while the Sahibganj depot which was run by the Mill and for certain hills is very much closer was almost empty. This development represents a great change in the normal Paharia attitude to sabai cultivation and it is only a jealous love of the hills linked with a sense of new profits that has brought it about. But there is little doubt that the more the Paharias can effectively run the hills themselves the more generally contented they will be.

This covert dislike of the intruder tinges their attitude to the Mill. The Mill's dealings with them have been scrupulously fair and sympathetic but many Paharias are still waiting to see how things will develop. They regard the Mill as a new and to some extent an unknown factor in the hills, 'Until last year, we knew

only mahajans. But what is Titagarh?' Moreover to many Paharias the mahajan is a money-lender as well as an agent and they fear that the Mill will turn out to be only another mahajan in a bigger and more powerful form. They have not seen any hill actually lost to a mahajan but many of them have a latent anxiety that one day their hills may go. It is this fear which lay behind the announcement of certain Paharias in 1942 that they would not take weeding advances from the Mill, 'if we take the mill's money, we shall lose our hills'. In 1943, however, the Paharias were co-operating fully with the Mill, trust was visibly growing and in course of time there is every hope that they will regard the Mill less as a mahajan than as an agent of their own welfare,

AGRICULTURE AND LAND TENURE AMONG THE APA TANIS

BY CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

The Apa Tanis are one of the least known people of the Assam Himalayas and their economy is without parallel in Tribal India.¹ Secluded from the outside world by natural barriers and warlike neighbours they have developed the resources of their small country to an extent which would be creditable to any civilized community and is truly miraculous in a tribe of archaic and in many ways primitive culture.

The Apa Tanis live in a single broad valley lying at an altitude of 5,000 feet, roughly midway between the Panior River and the Kamla, one of the main tributaries of the Subansiri River. Steep mountains rising to 8,000 feet ring this valley whose plateau-like formation stands in striking contrast to the neighbouring country where rivers rush through deep gorges and mountains sweep up to rugged crests with hardly as much as a ledge between river bank and peak seven or eight thousand feet above. There is much to suggest that the valley was once a lake far above the gorges on either side, and the silt brought down by streams from the surrounding mountains has filled out this lake and built up a plain whose fertile soil has enabled the Apa Tanis to develop their peculiar type of civilization. This plain is drained by the Kele River. Before the advent of the Apa Tanis it may have been a meandering stream in a spacious valley of swamps and bogs, but today it is forced into a more or less straight course between high dams. The wide flat valley has been transformed into an enormous mosaic of carefully tended rice terraces, while on islands of higher ground lie groves of pines, bamboos and fruit trees and great villages, almost towns, with labyrinths of densely crowded streets.

The length of this valley is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles and its breadth at the widest point about 2 miles. There are seven villages with some 3,650 houses; if we reckon five to six inhabitants for each house we come to a population of 20,000 Apa Tanis who all derive the bulk of their substance from the twenty odd square miles of cultivable land and use the surrounding hills only as hunting grounds. There are not many areas in rural India with a population of nearly a thousand per square mile, and I cannot recall any other example of an Asiatic hill-tribe surviving and indeed maintaining a comparatively high standard of living in so restricted a territory.

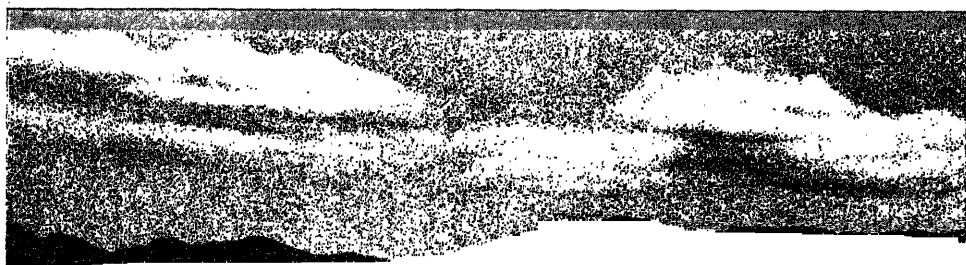
The agriculture of the Apa Tanis as the basis of their economy is thus not only of great intrinsic interest but provides us with an example of an elaborate and most efficient system of soil exploitation developed by a race cut off from the material development of the

¹ The Apa Tani country lies within the borders of the Balipara Frontier Tract, but no close contact had been established with the tribesmen until my wife and I visited the area in 1944 and 1945.



Fig. 1. The Apa Tani valley with rice-terraces after the harvest

Fig. 2. A side-valley in the Apa Tani country with rice-terraces





g. 3. An Apa Tani village with rows of granaries, interspersed with fruit-trees, lining the outskirts

g. 4. Apa Tanis digging-up a dry millet field

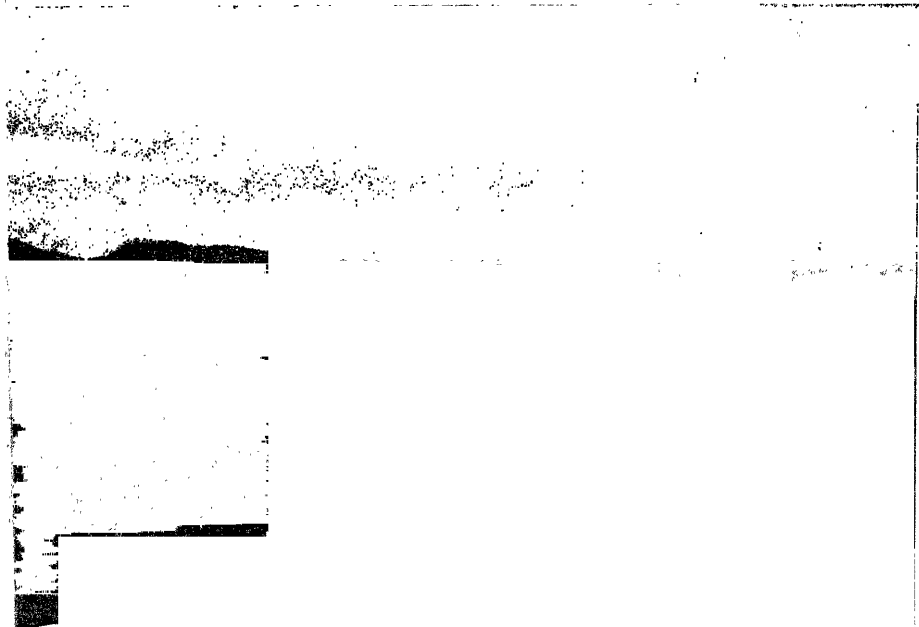
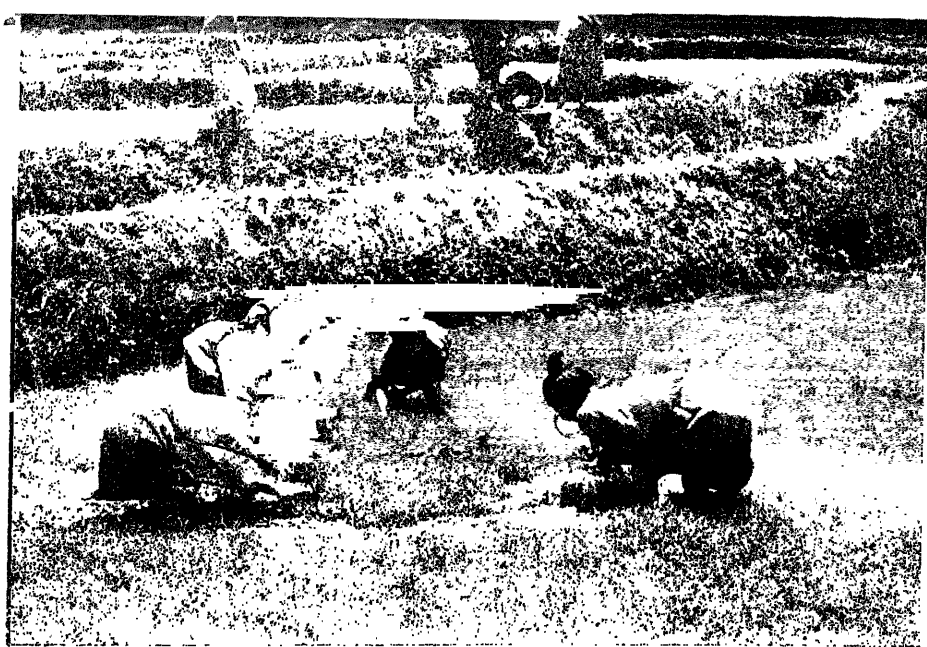




Fig. 5. Apa Tani boys and girls rebuilding the dam of a rice-field



Fig. 6. Apa Tani men puddling the soft mud of a rice-field



7. Apa Tani women gathering rice-seedlings from a nursery

8. Apa Tani women planting rice-seedlings in-between the stubble of the previous crop



Indian high civilizations. The achievement of this tribe is all the more remarkable since the neighbouring Dafla and Miri tribes follow quite different and far more primitive agricultural methods. Indeed to come from the land of these cultivators of oft-shifted hill-fields, carved as it would seem haphazardly from the jungle and abandoned again after one or two years, into the Apa Tani country with its purposeful order and evidence of the loving care bestowed on virtually every square yard is like bridging thousands of years of man's development and passing in a single step from the age of barbarism into the area of an ancient, highly developed civilization. In many ways the Apa Tani stands on the cultural and economic level of neolithic man (though iron is of course in common use), but if we consider the perfection with which by no other economic methods than those of the later neolithic age he has established his mastery over nature, we begin to understand how many of the oriental high civilizations could have been evolved during epochs preceding the dawn of the metal age.

I

THE LAY-OUT OF VILLAGES AND CULTIVATED LAND

There is a certain uniformity in the composition of Apa Tani villages and the lay-out of the surrounding land conforms to so definite a pattern that to visualize one village in its setting will give us a fairly accurate idea of the Apa Tani valley as a whole.

The village is built on high ground, that rises like an island from the level of the rice fields; hundreds of pile-dwellings stand wall to wall in streets, some wide and some narrow, that radiate from the assembly platforms (*lapang*) while on the outskirts, out of reach of village fires, are clusters of raised granaries; wherever there is space there are groves of bamboo, barefully fenced-in kitchen gardens, tall pines and fruit trees. Narrow lanes lead from the village through the groves and gardens to the irrigated rice-fields; more granaries on wooden piles fringe the edge of the island and nearby, always under water, are rows of small terraces, covered in winter with a layer of pale green slime, but luminous in early summer with a thick carpet of bright green rice seedlings. These are the nurseries for the young rice plants and beyond, stretching across the central valley, across the Kale river, as far as the village opposite are rice fields, terrace after terrace following each other in uninterrupted succession. Standing out from this sea of terraces are isolated hummocks of high land on which there are gardens and groves and the soft green sward of pastures and burial-grounds. Inter-village paths run along the dams and the Kale river is bridged by stout planks and bamboo structures. Towards the hill, the rice fields extend right up to the rising ground, threading a trail through the low undulating country below the high mountains. Here on gentle slopes are gardens, plots for vegetables, millet seedlings and tobacco, each strongly fenced-in and perhaps more groves

of bamboo, fruit trees and pines. High level ground is used for dry crops, but wherever there is water, an oozing trickle or a rushing mountain stream the Apa Tanis have harnessed it to their service and a tapering tongue of terraces climbs the narrow ravine or skirts the base of spurs and hillocks. At the fringes of the valleys there are the treeless, bracken covered hills that are used as grazing grounds for cattle and mithan, and the curious fenced in plots of luscious green which although one would take them for pastures, are really kept for the cultivation of leafy plants from which a salty substance, the black 'Apa Tani salt' is extracted.

From the broken country on the edge of the valley paths broad and in excellent repair as all paths in the Apa Tani country, rise steeply, but it is not yet the end of cultivated land. The hillsides are covered with forest, plantations of pines and other useful trees in carefully nurtured plots, where all trees are of the same age and kind. Several thousand feet above the valley is the untended forest, with its rank growth of enormous rhododendrons, the many trees of the sub-tropical rain forest and a multitude of climbers, tree ferns and orchids. From any vantage point on these high ranges you may have a bird's eye view of the lovely tranquil Apa Tani country: the villages, like small towns with winding streets and long rows of gabled thatched roofs, pressing round them the dark pine-groves and light green bamboo gardens, that in the spring are broken by the white and pink of flowering fruit trees, and on all sides the brilliant stretches of water flooded fields, an expanse almost like a lake, laced with the delicate irregular lines of dissecting dams. From this luminous sea emerge islands clothed in groves and gardens and irregular peninsulars of field and pasture, but however far the eye reaches, there is no spot in this valley which does not show the traces of man's controlling hand.

II

LAND TENURE

Land so intensively and carefully tended, the object of so much ingenuity and labour and transformed, no doubt, out of all recognition from its original state, must obviously be highly priced by those who reap the harvests of its manifold products. Among the Apa Tanis as among other peasant folks—but not among the neighbouring Daflas and Miris—the influence and social status of a man depends largely on his property in land. Land is the source of wealth and all other and less permanent possessions are mainly valued as a means of acquiring land.

Any study of Apa Tani agriculture must therefore begin with an inquiry into the system of land-tenure, which is intimately linked with the complex social organization.

According to the type of ownership the tribal land of the Apa Tanis can be divided into three categories :

1. Land owned by individuals,
2. Clan-land,
3. Common village-land.

The first category comprises practically all cultivated land *i.e.* irrigated rice fields, fields under dry crops, garden plots for maize, millet, vegetables and fruit trees, groves of bamboos, pines and other useful trees, as well as the sites for houses and granaries.

Clan-land consists of meadow land near the village used as pastures and burial grounds and tracts of forests, sometimes at a very great distance from the village, where only the members of the owner-clan have the right to hunt and trap.

Common village land is confined to one or two usually not extensive stretches of pasture, and to forest tracts on the periphery of the Apa Tani country.

Privately Owned Land

The disparity of rich and poor is very great, not so much in the standard of living as in the holdings of cultivable land. Except for slaves and a few very poor men of better class, the average Apa Tani owns land of various kinds. Inside the village he owns his house-site, which lies with rare exceptions in the quarter inhabited by his clan. A good house-site in one of the main streets, preferably near an assembly platform (*lapang*), has a very high price and is seldom to be had for less than 10 mithan¹.

As the population is more or less static most men inherit a house-site and have not to purchase it, but a man with several sons may have difficulty in securing for each a site in a good position. Poor men and freed slaves usually have houses on the outskirts of the clan quarter, and a man of good family, fallen on bad times, is often tempted to sell his valuable house-site and move to a back street. Many families have, on the other hand, spare house sites, which until required are used as vegetable gardens and maize plots much prized because of the ample manure available in the village.

Apart from his house-site a man requires the site for at least one granary, which lying on the outskirts of the village, is valued at one cow or half a mithan. And he requires one or more bamboo groves on the high ground adjoining the village or on a neighbouring 'island' separated from the village by rice fields. These groves are plots between one quarter of an acre and two acres in size; they are well protected against thieves by high fences and elaborately fastened doors and contain not only bamboo, but usually also some pines and fruit trees. Without such a bamboo grove a man must buy the material with which to build his house and

¹ Apa Tanis measure most higher values in mithan (*bos frontalis*), which are virtually a currency; the value of a full grown mithan expressed in money is today between Rs. 100 and Rs. 300.

granaries as well as bamboo required for making baskets and implements. For no wild bamboos grow within easy reach of the villages. Very poor men fetch bamboo from forests several hours march from their villages, but it is virtually impossible to bring the bamboo for an entire house from so great a distance. The bamboo groves are therefore essential parts of a man's holdings. A fairly large grove near the village with good bamboos and a few pine trees may change hands for three mithan, but a very small grove with very young bamboos or a grove on a hill side at some distance from the village can be obtained for as little as one mithan.

Sometimes interspersed among the bamboo and pine groves, but more often in separate places are garden plots, where vegetables, maize and tobacco are grown. Though on the same type of soil, gardens are cheaper than groves with standing timber or bamboo. Even the poorest men have usually such gardens which can be bought for a big pig, a Tibetan *dao* or three or four cloths.

But the most valuable part of a man's property are his irrigated rice fields on which he grows the bulk of his food supply. The price of such wet land is so high that unless an Apa Tani inherits at least two or three terraces he has very little chance of ever building up a holding sufficient for his needs. Near the villages where land is most expensive ten mithan and more may be paid for a single terrace about $\frac{1}{2}$ acre in size. Smaller plots in the same area change hands for two to five mithan, but it is only in the outlying side-valleys, which do not hold water as long as the centre of the valley, that a terrace of half an acre can be obtained for as little as two or three mithan and smaller terraces even for one mithan or a cow. There are, of course, no fixed rates for land, and a plot may within a few years change hands twice at widely differing prices.

A concrete case of a land sale may give some idea of the value of good rice fields. A man of Hari village brought from a man of his own clan two terraces of a total annual yield of approximately 100 small carrying baskets of unhusked rice (equalling about 650 seers) which corresponds roughly to the value of two small mithan bulls. For these two terraces he paid to the owner five large mithan cows, 11 oxen, as well as one Dafla cloth and an Apa Tani *dao*. To the five negotiators of the purchase he paid moreover fees amounting to the value of at least one mithan. Expressed in small mithan bulls—the standard for the valuation of land—the price plus commission amounted to 16 mithan and the annual yield of the field is thus just over 12% of the invested capital without reckoning the expense of the labour to work it.

An average family of five or six members can meet its consume of rice from the yield of approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 acres of well irrigated wet land having a yield of about 300 *yagi* baskets of unhusked rice. The value of such a holding is partly determined by the distance of the fields from the village, and the price for which it can be bought depends on various incidental circumstances. But it would be

safe to say that the price will not be lower than twenty and not higher than fifty small mithan. Expressed in Indian currency this would amount to between Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 5,000 and such a sum does not include the dry fields, gardens and groves a man must possess to be independent for his food supply.

The dry land used mainly for the cultivation of millet is much cheaper, and plots change hands for one or two mithan, while even a pig or an *endi* cloth may buy a small plot. Poor men with little or no wet land, have thus a means of growing at least part of their food supply, but rice cannot be cultivated on such dry land, which can therefore never altogether compensate for the lack of irrigated terraces.

In some places it is possible, however, to transform dry land into rice terraces, and a poor man may thus acquire some wet land at comparatively low cost. But such rice terraces on high ground are not as productive and therefore not as valuable as those in the bed of the valley; for they cannot be kept moist throughout the year.

Another way of obtaining land suitable for rice cultivation is to lay out new terraces on common clan-land. Many clans possess pastures in the bracken covered hillocks, and here and there a few narrow terraces can be fitted into a depression or ravine. Only members of the owner clan may build such terraces which become their private property when they have established permanent cultivation; but once under cultivation, these terraces may be sold to non-clan members.

Similarly common pastures near the village can sometimes be turned into fields for dry cultivation, but the cattle owners among the clan members often resist such attempts and will even force a poor and landless man to relinquish a plot on which he has begun to cultivate.

The high price of irrigated land, the fact that it can only be bought for cattle and mithan and the restricted area of the Apa Tani country, have given rise to a capitalistic trend in Apa Tani economics. A large part of the best land is today concentrated in the hands of a few rich men, whereas there are numerous poor men, with holdings too small to feed them and their families. This is not the place to investigate the reasons for this inequality, but it is obvious that a man without sufficient land to support himself has only a slender chance of ever acquiring the cattle with which he could purchase additional land. The rich man on the other hand, has usually a surplus of grain and by bartering this to neighbouring Daflas or Miris for mithan he obtains quite easily the means whereby he can add to his holding.

Two examples from the village of Haja may illustrate the manner in which holdings are built up and enlarged.

Nada Tomu, a member of the most prominent clan, was given by his father twenty five terraces lying in groups of five at five different points of the village land, as well as two bamboo groves and

one garden. He thus began with far more land than necessary to support a family. Every year he sold surplus rice to Daflas of neighbouring villages, and with the mithan received in payment he bought more land, altogether 62 terraces in ten different places. Nowadays he can buy with his surplus of rice an average of three mithan a year and he possesses twelve slaves who all work on his land, though only seven live in his house, the others having set up their own households.

Nendin Tagum of the same village acquired his land in a less orthodox fashion. He inherited from his father six rice terraces in two groups of three and bought subsequently three more terraces for a total of twenty mithan. Of these only three were mithan which he inherited; eight he had bought for rice and nine he had obtained as ransoms for captured Daflas.

But it is only the man of some means and an established social position who is likely to profit from the risky game of raiding and man-catching. For the poor landless man, without influential kinsmen to effect his release if the tables are turned, it is too dangerous. In recent years, however, an alley has been opened by which he too can attain a minimum of economic independence. Work in the plains of Assam has enabled many a man to purchase calves, either buying them for cash in the plains and driving them up to the hills, or purchasing them from fellow tribesmen for goods obtained in Assam.

It is characteristic of Apa Tani economics that land can only be bought for cattle. Pigs, cloth or *dao* may go with the price, but the basic price consists always of mithan and cattle. Only very small patches of dry land are occasionally sold for a big pig or some valuable, such as a Tibetan prayer bell, but the proper currency for transactions in real property is and remains cattle.

The principle that all cultivated land is private property of which the individual owner can dispose of as he wishes is so deeply ingrained in Apa Tani mentality that village boundaries are no real consideration in the transfer of land. For convenience everyone likes, of course, to have his fields as close to his village as possible, but nothing prevents a man from purchasing rice terraces on the land of a neighbouring village. Indeed in the central valley and particularly in the contact zones of the political units the ownership of land often transcends the village boundaries and the fields of the inhabitants of two adjacent villages dovetail across the traditional frontiers. In the side valleys intrusion of similar nature is less frequent and the transfer of land is here largely an endo-village affair, the intruders on a clan's traditional land being members of the same village, but of different clan.

At first sight it may appear that there is no check on the capitalistic trend in Apa Tani economics and that more and more land must of necessity accumulate in the hands of the rich men. Yet, such a view would be one-sided. There are various forces which

counteract such a development: The inheritance laws provide that the land of a man is divided more or less equally among his sons, and many men divide up most of their land when their sons marry and set up their own households. Thus large holdings are seldom handed on undivided to the next generation. A wealthy man is moreover expected to provide some land for his dependents. Slaves who have grown up in his house and shown themselves able and hard working, are usually allowed to set up their own households once they are married and have one or two children. Their master is then under an obligation to give them some land—it may not be very much, certainly not enough to make them self-sufficient—and once given, the land cannot be reclaimed unless the freed slaves now turned dependents, die without male issue. Finally there are the many vicissitudes of fate which may force a rich man to dispose quickly and at comparatively low rates of some of his land. A long drawn out illness with the need for innumerable sacrifices of mithan and cows, may compel him to sell land for cattle, or a member of his household may fall into the hands of raiders and must be ransomed with mithan and valuables which again may be obtainable only by the sale of land.

While Apa Tanis will give land to their dependents, they never hire it out, and a poor man cannot make a living by cultivating a rich man's land and sharing the crop. He must either be content with the irregular income of daily wages, working alternatively for several rich men, or he must join a rich man's household and accept a position hardly different from that of a slave.

Clan-Land

The land held jointly by all the members of a clan comprises undulating pasture land and bracken covered hillocks, hunting grounds in the forests surrounding the valley and, usually close to the village, an open grassy stretch used as burial ground and as a place where mithan can be tethered before slaughter or sale.

Generally clan-land is not held by a single clan, but by a group of two or even three clans that inhabit a separate quarter of the village, and may either intermarry or stand in a brother relationship. When a clan dies out the land does not become common village land, but goes by right to the traditional marriage partners of the extinct clan.

The importance of the clan land lies not so much in the open pasturage, but in the forest tracts used for the extraction of wood and cane, for trapping and for hunting. These tracts are not concentrated in one block, but are scattered over the hills enclosing the Apa Tani country.

The two principal clans of Duta village, for instance, possess jointly twenty-nine tracts of common land in addition to their collective burial ground, Pape, in the central valley. These tracts are known by name and comprise a cluster of bare hills used for grazing, a piece of jungle with a salt lick for mithan, six tracts of

forest near the village used only for cutting firewood, grazing mithan and sometimes for rat-hunting; the remaining twenty one tracts are in widely separated areas, some near the Dafla village of Licha, west of Duta, others south of Hang village about one day's journey from Duta and yet others east of Hari. Trapping in these tracts is the prerogative of the owners, but any Apa Tani may hunt there with bow and arrow and even cut wood.

Inside such clan forests certain areas are the trapping preserve of individual clan-members and it is indeed obvious that the setting of traps and particularly spear traps, dangerous to man and beast alike, must somehow be regulated. Such an area has all the features of private property except that the owner's exclusive rights cover only trapping and the extraction of cane; for hunting with spears or bows and arrows his piece of forest is open to all members of the clans with adjoining hunting grounds, a group which may comprise part of a village, a whole village or even two villages. It is only within this group that a man may sell his forest, or more precisely his right to trap and cut cane within a circumscribed area. The prices paid for such rights are small compared to the prices of cultivated land or groves, and trapping grounds change hands for as little as a pig, a few *dao* or several cloths.

Common Village-Land

Within the Apa Tani valley the areas held jointly by all clans of a village are comparatively small and unimportant, but there are certain tracts of forest on the periphery of the Apa Tani country which are claimed by the one or other village without being the property of individual clans. These tracts are used as hunting grounds, but they lie at too great a distance from the villages to be useful for trapping or as pastures for mithan.

The common village-land within the Apa Tani valley, on the other hand, is mainly used as pasture for oxen. Theoretically it is a reserve where men short of land may construct new gardens and fields for dry crops, but such a transformation of pasture into cultivated land needs the consent or at least the connivance of the other villagers.

III

METHODS OF TILLAGE

Only by the most intensive and skilful working of the available land can the Apa Tanis maintain themselves in an area where one square mile of land, comprising fields, gardens, groves and pastures, must provide the subsistence for at least one thousand persons, or roughly speaking two hundred families. Their methods of tillage are primitive, and indeed of a type proper to the neolithic age rather than to the world's great peasant civilizations, in so far as they depend entirely on human labour; but in other respects they are highly specialized and are proof of a far greater capacity for planning and concerted effort than the wasteful methods of cul-

tivation in many parts of India, familiar for millenia with the plough and the exploitation of animal labour.

Wet Crops

The corner stone of Apa Tani agriculture is the cultivation of rice on irrigated terraces. Rice is the staple food, and all other crops are grown mainly to provide variety of diet and to utilize those portions of the country not suitable for irrigation. Rice too is the principal item in the Apa Tanis' export trade.

But for the high lying islands and the undulating tongues of land under dry crops, and the spurs and hillocks of the broken country at the foot of the hills, the whole bed of the central basin as well as every side valley is laid out in rice terraces (*asi gare*). The lay-out of these terraces as we may well call them, though many lie almost on a level, can best be visualized if we begin our description with the highest terraces at the top end of a side valley where a stream is first tapped and follow the course of the water from terrace to terrace until it flows into the broad bowl of the main valley where the surplus water from channel and terrace drains into the Kele, the river which traverses the entire length of the Apa Tani valley.

Everyone of the larger streams rising on the wooded heights that ring the Apa Tani country, is tapped soon after it emerges from the forest and reaches a gully wide enough to accommodate a series of narrow terraces. A short distance above the terraces occurs the first diversion from the stream but usually only a little water is here deflected; the stream continues on its course, which is often deepened and banked, while the feeder channel branching off at an angle leads water alongside the series of terraces so that by blocking or opening the connecting ducts any field can be flooded or drained as required. At the head of the valley the terraces are on an average narrow, perhaps 15 by 30 yards, are partly dug out of the hill-side and partly built up, with a difference of one to three feet in the level of the individual terraces or groups of terraces. As the valley broadens, the terraces grow in size and the differences in their level dwindle to one or even half a foot. But wherever the trickle of a spring has eaten a small ravine into the fold of the rounded hillocks that flank the valley subsidiary series of small terraces are built up to meet the water practically at its source. It is in these subsidiary valleys, where poor men short of land are using every irrigable corner for cultivation, that the individual terraces are narrowest and the dams highest, the difference between one terrace and the next being often as much as five or six feet. But unlike such terrace builders as the Angami Nagas or the Ifugaos of North Luzon, the Apa Tani do not construct terraces that climb the mountain slopes for a thousand feet and more. The genius of the Apa Tanis has manifested itself rather in a meticulous and expert care for every crop, than in impressive feats of engineering. Yet, the lay-out of the terraces is no mean example of co-ordination of effort and perfection of technique. In the side valleys several

hundred yards broad, the parent stream has often been tapped of most of its water and when it fans out into the central valley only a shallow flow remains in the main channel, deep cut against times of heavy rain when floods are a threat to the dams. These courses are secured against flood erosion by rows of wooden stakes and threatened points strengthened by linings of strong bamboo matting. Along the embankments of the main channels run paths strewn with gravel which renders them usable in even the wettest weather. After heavy rain there is always the danger of flood water breaking over the dams and submerging the sprouting crop. Normally, however, water is never allowed to overflow the dams. Where two terraces lie on much the same level the mud dam is cut to allow the water to flow from one field to the next but elsewhere the terraces are drained through wide wooden or bamboo pipes let into the dam; these allow of a steady flow from the higher to the lower terrace without the rush of water eating into the dam.

The rainfall is so ample and the many streams and rivulets converging from the ring of high wooded ranges bring so much water into the shallow bowl of the Apa Tani country, that the flooding of all the low-lying terraces is on the whole no problem. Water rights are not sold or bought, and there are no fixed rules as to which terraces have the first claim on the water of any particular stream. Disputes over water are said to be rare, but when they occur a settlement can usually be reached by the division of a channel.

There is an essential difference between the terraces in the bottom of the valleys, which are served by streams and channels, and are as a rule kept under water during the greater part of the year, and terraces on high ground which, watered by monsoon rivulets, are largely rain fed. We will see presently that they receive different treatment and are used for growing different varieties of rice.

The upkeep of the terrace fields, dams and channels absorbs a major part of the Apa Tanis' energy. The harvest is hardly garnered when repairs and alterations on dams are put in hand and throughout the winter and spring until the first days in May, men and women can be seen moving earth, levelling fields, constructing and rebuilding dams, often standing ankle deep in mud and water at a temperature only just above freezing point. They are not content merely to maintain an established system of terraces and channels which to the casual observer looks little short of perfect. If the yield of a field is not up to standard an Apa Tani will carry out improvements before the next sowing season; divide a large field perhaps not perfectly watered into two terraces, or conversely turn two terraces into one, gaining thereby the space of the dividing dam. For all such earthworks as well as the repairing of embankments and the levelling of fields the Apa Tani shifts the soil from one area to another on large flat wooden trays, that are easily dragged over the slimy surface of the partially flooded ground. Where the

work is done by parties of young men and girls, it is mainly the latter who with hoes hack up the soil or cut away the face of bunds and fields while the young men and boys load the soil on to the trays and drag it off for redistribution. Both flat wooden batons and iron hoes are used in the remodelling and repairing of dams and fields. The wooden batons are long thin slivers of wood pointed at one end and the iron hoes are of the type common in tea-gardens and are without exception imported from Assam; although today they appear indispensable to the Apa Tani, old men still remember the wooden hoe-like implement used by their elders and there can be no doubt that then the work of building terraces took up an even greater part of the Apa Tanis time.

Although there do not seem to be many openings for an expansion of the area under irrigation, there passes no year without some small plot being turned into terrace fields. The easiest way of bringing new land under rice cultivation is to level and ring with dams a plot previously used for growing millet, relying on rain water to fill the terrace and soften the ground. But such fields can only be used for the early rice, for the shortest period of dry weather seriously harms the crop. Where a perennial stream can be tapped and the water brought in a channel, the chances for gaining new valuable fields are far better. Villages like Michi Bamin and Hang and, to a lesser degree, Hari have still land for expansion and in the last two years new terraces have been built in outlying areas, in marshy ground as well as built up the course of streamlets that trickle from some obscure source. Men of Hang village, for instance, have recently constructed a whole series of terraces on land that had been occupied by pine-groves and pasture, and have successfully carried water from a stream by a long channel across a pasture and then split the channel into several branches to provide sufficient feed for fifteen to twenty terraces.

We have seen that there are two types of rice fields; those permanently kept under water or at least in a very moist condition, and those that dry out and harden soon after harvest. The former, which are considered the more valuable are not dug over and on these the stubble sprouts in the following year as soon as the field has been flooded. The rice is here perennial and the plants bear fruit for two or three years. In the planting season, women go over the field planting out barren patches, but the entire field remains undisturbed for many years, and manure is only scattered over the surface. Such fields are used exclusively for a late ripening variety of rice (*emo*). Close to them lie terraces which could also be kept under water the whole year, but are allowed to drain off; these are cleaned and dug over with hoes before each period of cultivation and then flooded from channels; the water is allowed to filter slowly over the field and when the soil is thoroughly impregnated it is puddled by young men who, supporting themselves between two poles, treadle the mud underfoot so that to a depth

of two or three feet the soil is churned to a smooth thick paste. On these fields the three varieties of early ripening rice (*plare*, *plate* and *plaping*) are grown.

Distinct from low lying, channel-fed terraces are those on higher ground, which depend almost entirely on monsoon streams. There the ground is dug over with hoes and the clods are broken by hand or moon-shaped hoes. On some of these terraces the channel water is scarcely enough to convert more than the surface soil into mud at the time of transplanting, and during the period of growth the rice is largely dependent on rainfall.

All rice is sown in nurseries. These are small terraces lying for the most part immediately below the villages adjoining the granaries or in narrow protected valleys shut in by bamboo and pine groves. Only a few nurseries lie at any distance from the village, in the middle of the terrace fields. Throughout the year the nurseries are kept deep under water and a good deal of manure is regularly thrown in. In the months before the sowing of the rice, the surface water is drained off, the soil thoroughly cleaned and puddled until it turns into a thick cream, in which the workers sink up to their knees.

By the second half of February the nurseries (*miding*) lie ready for the seed, the surface of the mud is levelled and the small terraces ringed by half hoops of split bamboo or, wherever there is danger from straying cows, fenced-in with bamboo lattice. The seed is not sprouted before sowing. The women scatter it dry, as it comes from the granary, over the surface of the mud. Each variety of rice is sown in separate blocks, the larger part of the nursery being devoted to the late ripening kinds. After sowing the seed is not covered; within a few days it takes root and soon a thick film of green shoots covers the ground; then the water is allowed to filter into the field.

The transplanting of the rice begins in the middle of April. First the seedlings of the early ripening *plare* rice are planted out in those newly flooded terraces which have been dug over with hoes and then softened by treading. At that time the men and boys are still busy in rebuilding and preparing other terraces and the transplanting is done by women and girls who lift the seedlings from the nurseries, tie them into bunches and carry them, still wet from the water, in open-work basket to the fields. Starting at the edge of the field they move forward as they work, planting single seedlings at intervals of about 8 inches.¹

Next the *plate* rice and then the *plaping* rice, both early ripening varieties, are transplanted on terraces prepared in a similar manner. The three early varieties of rice are also grown on out-lying terraces on high ground with scanty water supply, but here

¹ In the plains of Assam the workers move backwards when transplanting, and plant three or four seedlings in one place and at a distance of about twenty inches.

transplanting awaits the first heavy rain and is indeed often deferred till the first half of May.

All through the spring months work on the dams continues and at the end of April begins the transplanting of the three late ripening varieties of rice (*empu*, *elang* and *rade*), which are known collectively as *emo* and form the bulk of the Apa Tanis' rice crop. The late ripening rice is planted out on terraces most of which have been cleaned by hand, but not dug over and where the previous year's rice-plants are already sprouting. After a period of years such terraces are also dug over and then the seedlings are planted into the soft, newly turned soil before the field is actually flooded. Towards the end of the transplanting season, young men and boys, largely free from other work, join in finishing the transplanting, but the major part of the work is done by women.

By the middle of May all the fields in the central valley are planted out and people are busy transplanting on the distant, late flooded fields of side valleys and, as we will see presently, with the work on their dry land.

Lastly *emo* rice is planted even in some of the shallower waterways and appears to thrive in spite of the current and of periodical submersion on days when heavy rain floods the channels.

The weeding of the rice fields is done with great thoroughness; permanently flooded terraces are weeded two or three times, and terraces less amply watered as much as five times. Certain outlying fields near the grazing grounds or forest land are fenced in with strong wooden stakes either individually or in blocks to protect them against straying mithan. But in the area between the villages no fencing is necessary.

The harvest of the *plare* rice, the early ripening red rice, begins early in August. This rice is not cut, but the grains are stripped from the ears by hand. Most poorer people are by this time short of food, and the newly reaped rice is eaten almost at once.

Shortly afterwards the *plate* rice, a white variety, ripens and is reaped in similar manner.

The *plaping* rice, which is also white, ripens in the beginning of September on the fields where it was planted early, and at the end of the month on outlying fields, where planting was late.

The main rice-harvest, when all *emo* rice—the white *empu* and *rade*, and the red *elang*, all bearded varieties—is reaped at the same time, begins in the middle of October and lasts until early in November. It demands perhaps the greatest concerted effort of the year, and men, women and children work without respite for two or three weeks. The women reap the rice with sickles, bought in the plains and used nowadays generally in place of the knives of Apa Tani blacksmiths, cutting the stalks about a foot from the ground. Tied into sheaves the ears are heaped together and the men thrash out the grain on the spot in a somewhat unusual fashion. The sheaves are beaten against a slanting wooden board and the grain

slides down into a large carrying basket, which is immediately carried off to the granary; the straw which is the Apa Tanis' principal thatching material is stacked or just left lying about in low piles on the field.

Seed grain of all types of rice is separated from the food supply while still on the fields, the best ears being allocated for this purpose; but the rest of the harvest is poured on the floor of the granary, for Apa Tanis do not use baskets for storing their grain. The granaries are built on wooden poles, and roofed not with thatch but with ribs of split bamboos. There are no devices to keep away rats, which are a pest both in house and granary.

When the harvest is over the cows are let loose on the fields and throughout the winter months they are free to graze on the stubble, but there are too few of these animals for their manure substantially to benefit land under such constant and intensive cultivation. The Apa Tanis, however, recognize the need for preserving the fertility of the soil, and they expend a great amount of energy on manuring. Throughout the winter and spring months, from the end of the harvest until the time for transplanting, women and men are to be seen daily carrying baskets of rice chaff, pig and chicken droppings, ashes and kitchen refuse to heap on their fields. When the dried out terraces for the early rice are dug over and cleaned, the stubble and rubbish is collected in heaps and burnt. The ashes are then spread out and worked into the soil, and this process is also adopted in the case of the dry millet fields. Even cattle-dung is collected from the pastures and whenever a house is rebuilt the thick layer of black soil below it, a medley of kitchen-refuse, ashes, animal dung and human excrement, is excavated, filled into basket and as the most valuable of manures, spread over the nurseries and vegetable gardens.

Thus the Apa Tani gives back to the soil much of what he extracts, and the rich humus washed year after year from the high ranges, clad in sub-tropical rain-forest never touched by an axe, and deposited by innumerable streams in irrigation channels and on terrace fields, goes no doubt a long way in maintaining soil-fertility.

Dry Crops

Though dry crops do not rival rice in importance, the same meticulous care which the Apa Tani lavishes on his rice terraces characterises his treatment of millet, maize and various vegetables. Many of these crops are grown in gardens and the methods employed in their cultivation are those of the horticulturist rather than of the farmer.

Dry fields lie on islands and peninsulars of slightly raised ground and on the rolling land that leads up to the broken country on the fringes of the valley. Besides the fenced-in gardens that often adjoin groves of bamboo and pine, there are the stretches of open fields, used almost exclusively for the cultivation of millet. The

soil of gardens and fields is identical, and indeed new garden plots are sometimes established in the middle of a stretch of millet fields.

The principal dry crop is *Eleusine coracana*, and of this two varieties are grown; an early millet (*mipa*), which is mainly planted along bunds of rice fields and in garden plots, and a later ripening millet (*sarte*) cultivated on the open dry fields and also planted on rice field bunds. Both varieties are, like rice, transplanted, and this seems to be a peculiarity of the Apa Tanis. Neither among the neighbouring Daflas nor anywhere else in Assam have I heard of *Eleusine coracana*—a crop equally suitable for shifting cultivation and peasant farming—being transplanted or sown in any way other than by broadcasting.¹ The Apa Tanis grow the seedlings in gardens near the houses or in small fenced-in plots on islands surrounded by rice fields. They scatter the seed densely over the moist soil, but do not cover it with earth. At the end of April, when the young plants of the *mipa* millet are about 5 inches high, they are planted out in gardens and on the dams of rice fields. This work is usually done by two women; the one, wielding a pointed stick, makes holes in the earth and the other moving after her, plants the millet-seedlings and closes the earth with her fingers. It is a laborious process, typical of the Apa Tanis' determination to make the fullest use of every square foot of their country. When the millet ripens it lines every path along the dams, and although the yield on the dams enclosing one terrace may not be very considerable, the total amount of millet grown on many miles of dams must come to thousands of baskets. An additional advantage is that the roots of the millets strengthen the dams, not only during the period of cultivation, but even when the crops have been reaped and the drying dams have the tendency to crumble.

A few weeks later, mainly in the first half of May, late ripening *sarte* millet is planted out on the remaining rice bunds and on many an odd bit of dry grounds between paths, dams and channels. These plots are laid out in neat beds, a few feet square, separated by paths, and single seedlings are planted at intervals of about 5 inches. Immediately before planting the tops of the seedlings are clipped and this is said to lead to a quick and strong growth.

But the preparation of the dry fields has to wait until all the work on the irrigated terraces and most of the transplanting of rice is completed. It is only in the first half of May that the Apa Tanis find the time to dig over the dry fields, still covered with last year's stubble. This is mainly a man's job; it is done by groups of three to six young men, but occasionally one or two girls may work with them side by side. Today large iron hoes are used for turning over the soil, but in the old times the work was done with wooden hoes and must then have been even more strenuous. Most of the dry fields are almost flat, but some run up the gentle slopes

¹ But in some parts of the Deccan *Eleusine coracana* is being grown from seedlings and transplanted.

of the broken country and there rough terraces are built to prevent erosion and too rapid drainage. There is no attempt to flatten these terraces, a moderate gradient being considered no disadvantage for dry crops. After the men have turned over the soil, the women break up the clods and smooth the ground with a small hoe (*palu*) which is made of split bamboo looped so that the crossed ends form a handle. Finally the *sarte* millet is taken from the nurseries and the seedlings are planted out one by one on the dry fields. Here the women do not hole the ground with sticks, but press the plants gently into the level surface of the rain-soaked earth.

Millet is weeded twice, and this too is done by women with their bamboo hoes. The early *mipa* ripens at the same time as the *plare* rice in the first half of August. It is grown in small quantities, and the reaping is done almost entirely by the women who cut off the ears and take them home for immediate consume. Only rarely is the early millet stored in granaries. *Mipa* millet is stored with the grain still in ear; it is never threshed until required for the pot when threshing and husking is a combined operation conducted with heavy pounders in bowl-shaped blocks.

The harvest of the *sarte* millet follows the *emo* rice harvest, early in November and millet is thus the latest ripening crop. The ears are cut with sickles and carried into the granaries, where they are heaped on the floor.

Millet is mainly used for making beer but is sometimes also crushed and made into a rough kind of bread. Apa Tanis do not sell millet to outsiders, and they sometimes even buy millet from neighbouring Daflas.

Although familiar with *Setaria italica* and *Sorghum vulgare* both cultivated by Daflas and Miris, the Apa Tanis only grow *Eleusine coracana*.

The dry crop next in importance to millet is maize, and of this the Apa Tanis cultivate three varieties: *nire*, a white and red variety, ripening before the *plare* rice and thus the first of all the grain crops, *nite*, a white and red variety ripening together with the *plate* rice, and *nime tani*, a red variety with very small cobs, ripening together with the *plaping* rice. All three varieties of maize are grown in the gardens inside the village, but *nire* and *nite* are also cultivated in the more distant garden plots near groves and dry fields. The individual grains are dibbled into the ground 8 to 10 inches apart and maize is thus the only grain crop the Apa Tanis do not transplant.

The other garden crops of the Apa Tanis are beans, chillies, tobacco, marrow, cucumbers, taro, ginger, potatoes, tomatoes and a coarse kind of spinach. All these vegetables are sown in the gardens both inside the villages and near bamboo groves early in March, and chillies, tobacco and tomatoes are transplanted a few weeks later.

The Apa Tani beans (*perung*) are a small non-climbing variety with seeds of a light golden brown, that are dried and eaten boiled.

The chillies cultivated in the Apa Tani country are larger than the kind commonly grown in India, they find a ready market in the plains and are indeed the only vegetable grown not only for home-consumption but for sale in the plains of Assam, where Apa Tanis exchange them mainly for salt.

Tobacco is cultivated with great care; all Apa Tanis both smoke and chew tobacco from a very early age. The first leaves are plucked in the beginning of May; these are not dried whole, but are cut up, trampled under foot and then dried on mats.

Marrows ripen in September and October and are boiled, but cucumbers are usually eaten raw.

Taro plays no very important role in Apa Tani diet and is grown much less than in the neighbouring Dafla country, but ginger is a favourite cooking spice and thinly sliced is eaten on many ceremonial occasions.

Potatoes and tomatoes are obviously of comparatively recent introduction and are neither very large nor very extensively cultivated. The first potatoes are dug up as early as May, and considering how economical Apa Tanis are in other respects it is strange that they often dig up and eat potatoes hardly as big as a cherry.

From the point of view of their value to Apa Tani diet the leafy, spinach-like vegetables are probably the most important garden produce. These are grown and eaten in very large quantities, and with a gap of a few winter months they are available throughout the whole year. Though not specifically grown as food, young bamboo shoots from the bamboo groves are gathered and eaten in March, April and May.

It may be noted here that cotton does not rank among the dry crops of the Apa Tanis. Their weaving industry is higher developed than that of any tribe in the vicinity, but the cultivation of cotton on land urgently required for growing food crops is apparently not considered an economical proposition and the Apa Tanis purchase nearly all their cotton from neighbouring Daflas, returning the seeds after the cotton has been ginned for the Daflas next season's sowings.

Groves: Covering less ground than the irrigated rice terraces, but rather more than the vegetable gardens the groves of bamboo, pines and fruit-trees form an integral part of Apa Tanis economics. Villages of up to a thousand houses would have difficulty in finding sufficient building material in nearby forests, unless regeneration kept pace with felling.

In the hills surrounding the Apa Tani country various kinds of bamboos occur, but that cultivated in carefully tended groves is a medium sized straight stemmed variety of male bamboo, which stands up well to the cold winters with occasional snow-fall. According to tradition the Apa Tanis brought this species with them when in the dim ages of the past they arrived in the Apa Tani valley. Be this as it may, the Apa Tani bamboo is not found in the

surrounding countryside except where it has been cultivated in the village of nearby Daflas. Other Daflas do cultivate isolated clumps of bamboo, usually the giant spraying species also found in Assam. But the Apa Tani lays out whole groves of bamboo spacing out the roots at two or three foot intervals, and rigorously prunes every shoot allowing only one or two stems to grow from each root. Once established a grove will retain its regenerative power indefinitely and can be exploited over a period of years. Before laying out a new grove the Apa Tani cleans and levels the soil almost as carefully as on his dry fields surrounding the whole plot with high fences. The roots for a new grove are lifted from an overcrowded grove and planted in shallow holes during the months of December, January or early February, for the roots set forth their first new shoots in April. Being male, the Apa Tani bamboo never seed, and the planting of roots is the only way of propagation.

In good soil bamboos grow to a size usable for house-building in four years, but only bamboos of seven to ten years growth are strong enough for house posts or main rafters.

Pinus excelsa is the most characteristic tree of the Apa Tani country. It does not occur in neighbouring valleys of similar altitude, and the Apa Tanis hold that they brought it with them when they immigrated from the country north of the Kamla and Subansiri River. And some points well over 6000 feet, on their traditional route of migration there are small number of pine trees and the Apa Tani claim that these were planted by their ancestors as they passed through the country.

Pinus excelsa is a magnificent tree which in the Apa Tani country grows to a height of over 170 feet; it is found both in the forest of the lower slopes and in groves near the villages. In the vicinity of villages, groves of bamboo are generally interspersed with pines or part of a grove may be set aside for pine trees; but in groves where pines have grown to a great height bamboos do not thrive in the shade of their spreading branches.

The time for planting young saplings, brought from the forest or more often taken from other groves, is February and the first half of March. For four or five young trees suitable for transplanting (about one or two feet high) one *dao* or a cloth or rice of similar value is paid. The wood of *Pinus excelsa* is used for building purposes, roughly cut house-posts or long slender rafters, well as for firewood; the Apa Tanis tap the larger trees and concoct from the resin a medicament calculated to cure all inflammations, swellings, aches and pains. Owing to its resinous content this pine makes very fine torches and no Apa Tani will set off on a journey without one or two chips in his bag with which to kindle a fire.

Most groves contain besides bamboos and pines also a number of fruit trees and in the spring the fresh green of forest, garden and grove is splashed with the white, pink and rose of their blossoms. There are four distinct kinds of fruit trees cultivated by Apa Tani.

Semo is a small cherry, the flower a dark rose, the fruit slightly oblong, reddish with white pulp. *Thakhum* is a pink flowering peach, smaller but not essentially different from the peach grown in Europe either in flower or fruit. These peach trees are planted not only in the groves, but also in gardens and close to houses. *Pita* is a very small pear and *picha* a greenish and rather bitter apple; both are found also along paths and lanes and on burial grounds where they are considered village or clan property. All fruit trees are planted in March or early April.

Whereas the groves on flat land close to the village contain as a rule only bamboo, pines and fruit trees in those running up hill slopes, pines are sometimes interspersed with a few other trees valuable as building material. For in re-afforesting a slope with young pines, Apa Tanis sometimes leave existing timber which will come in usefully. The well-stocked pine groves on the hill-sides surrounding the valley are remarkable tribute to the Apa Tanis' skill in forestry; the trees are usually of uniform age and the entire grove is fenced-in to protect it against straying cattle.

IV

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

In Apa Tani economics the breeding of domestic animals plays a secondary role and a very considerable number of the mithan and pigs required for sacrifice and slaughter are bought from neighbouring Daflas and Miris. It is not that the Apa Tanis do not value mithan or pigs, but that in their intensively cultivated country there is little scope for large herds of cattle, and in the congested villages no room for roaming pigs.

Though not the main source of wealth as among the Daflas, the mithan (*bos frontalis*) is yet an important measure of wealth, and a man's economic status is judged by the number of his mithan almost as much as by the size of his land. Indeed mithan are in a manner of speaking the recognized currency in all transactions to do with land; the value of a field can only be expressed in mithan. It thus appears that the mithan has, apart from its material value as a source of meat, a fictitious value as a medium of exchange. A man, for instance, who has a surplus of grain and wants to acquire additional land, will sell his surplus rice for mithan and then with these mithan purchase land. Bride-prices, ransoms and fines are usually paid in mithan, and while pigs are the sacrificial animals at most of the communal agricultural rites, mithan must be slaughtered at the rites and feasts performed by individuals who want to raise their prestige.

I have no statistics regarding the number of mithan owned by Apa Tanis, but believe that it must lie between two and three thousand. Only a very few of these animals are, however, to be seen in the Apa Tani valley and Apa Tanis say if they kept all their mithan near their villages and cultivation there would not be a

blade of rice or millet left. Mithan prefer the shade of the forest to the open pastures, and roam single or in small groups rather than in large herds. Considering the manner in which mithan are kept by Apa Tanis we can hardly class them as 'domestic' animals, for the only times when a mithan comes anywhere near his owner's house is possible on the day of purchase and invariably on the day of slaughter. Otherwise mithan live in the forest and are only rarely and for specific reason, such as for inspection by purchasers or for care in times of sickness brought to the communal grazing grounds near the village and kept there tied up on long ropes.

Each village and in some villages each *khel* or clan owns communal grazing grounds for mithan, usually a damp shady valley watered by a stream, with patches of bog where mithan can wallow up to their knees. In some of these valleys there are natural salt licks and it seems that a mithan let loose in such a haunt, will not stray far a-field. Some of these forest pastures are many hours walk from the Apa Tani villages and theft of unguarded mithan is the most frequent cause of trouble between the Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours. Every four or five days a man will either go himself or send a slave to have a look at his mithan; a little salt fed from the palm of the hand and the soft call "*Leli Leli Leli*" brings an animal from the thicket. The Apa Tanis are connoisseurs in mithan characteristics and an animal's points are so catalogued in their minds that identification is no difficulty, but rich men with many mithan sometimes mark the horns with their own signs. Whereas in the Naga Hills mithan are invariably black with white stockings, the colourings of Apa Tani mithan cover a wide range; there are black, white and piebald mithan, mithan with white or black stockings and many with lovely creamy patches that deepen to orange where the hair is longest.

But many mithan owners, and I believe they are the majority, do not keep their animals in the Apa Tani country at all; they give them into the care of Dafla and Miri friends. Not only are Daflas and Miris experienced in the keeping of cattle, but their country is also far better suited for mithan than the Apa Tani valley and they can keep the animals fairly close to their villages without the risk of great damage to the crops, their *jhum*-fields being as a rule well fenced-in. The reward for keeping another man's mithan is one calf out of three or four according to agreement. By dispersing his mithan over several villages an Apa Tani insures himself moreover against the danger of losing his entire stock through disease. Epidemics of foot and mouth disease and rinderpest are fairly frequent and have been known to decimate the livestock of whole areas.

Neither Apa Tanis nor Daflas and Miris control the breeding of mithan, and as the animals are largely left to themselves and the bulls are never castrated any selective mating would indeed be impossible.

Besides the mithan owned by individuals, there are a number of mithan which are the common property of village, *khel* or clan and these are used for sacrifices in the interest of the whole community.

Less valuable than mithan, but used in the same manner for sacrifices, as a source of meat and as currency, but never milked, are oxen of the small breed common in the plains of Assam. This cattle is almost certainly derived from imported stock and even to-day Apa Tanis buy calves in the plains and drive them up to the Apa Tani country. Those born in the hills have a thicker coat than plains cattle and they stand up well to the frost of winter. Unlike mithan cattle rarely leaves the open parts of the valley and usually remains on the grasslands near villages. In the spring and summer there is ample grazing but in the winter, when the pastures are shrivelled and brown, the cattle lives precariously on the rice and millet stubble of the previous harvest. Apa Tanis make no attempt to feed their cattle, and the cows are allowed to wander over the dried out rice terraces and millet fields, any damage done to the brittle dams being outweighed by the value of their manure.

As soon as the rice and particularly the millet on the dry fields is planted out the cattle is banished to the grazing grounds at the ends of the valleys and the fields in the vicinity are carefully fenced-in so that a cow would have to pass through a labyrinth of narrow passages and lanes, before it could reach the centre of the valley where there are unprotected plots.

Very little care is given to this cattle, and there is no system of herd boys. Summer and winter the animals are in the open by day and night. Theft of cattle is therefore easy, and it is more the drastic punishment meted out to offenders—death being the penalty for habitual thieves—than the precautions of the owners that provide a safeguard. The neighbouring Daflas do not steal cows as frequently as mithan, for thieves would have to venture close to the villages and in driving off the cattle in the open country they would risk being intercepted.

Crosses of mithan and plains cattle are known, and hybrids count for ritual purpose as mithan. But the Apa Tanis certainly do not encourage cross-breeding, and cattle and mithan are kept apart by their own habits and preferences for different grazing grounds. The problem of cross breeds is therefore of little practical importance.

No goats are kept in the Apa Tani valley. The goat is too destructive an animal to be let loose in such a carefully husbanded area. A few Apa Tanis do however own goats and keep them with friends in neighbouring Daflas villages; they are never milked but they can be used for certain private sacrifices, such as the propitiation of disease bringing spirits, and the meat is, of course, readily eaten. On the whole, however, Apa Tanis are not interested in

goats ; they think of them only as meat and not as an investment. This attitude is born out by the comparative valuation of male and female goats ; among the Daflas the price of a she-goat is higher than that of a he-goat, but the Apa Tanis, indifferent to the possibilities of goat breeding, pay more for a large male goat.

Pigs are in certain respects the favourite domestic animals and here the word domestic applies in its narrowest sense. For Apa Tani pigs are housed below the pile born dwellings in boarded-up enclosures between the house poles. Once a pig enters this enclosure it leaves it usually only on the day of slaughter. No pigs roam the village streets ; for if let loose they would be a serious danger to rice-nurseries, gardens and fields. This necessity of keeping pigs shut up sets a limit to their numbers, for unlike Dafla or Miri pigs which find a good deal of food rummaging about the village the pigs of the Apa Tanis must be fed, and no household can afford more than three or four full grown pigs at a time. The food given to pigs consists of the husks of grain, the dregs remaining from the brewing of millet and rice beer, ordinary kitchen refuse, the sago-like pith of a certain forest tree, and last not least human excrement. Apa Tanis relieve themselves on narrow verandas that run alongside their houses and the excrements, which fall straight into the pig sty, are immediately devoured. In the huge villages the pig is a very necessary sanitary institution and the house of a poor man without any pigs has not a pleasant smell.

Yet, comparatively few pigs are bred. Apa Tanis find it on the whole more profitable to buy young pigs from Daflas and Miris and feed them until they are full grown rather than keep sows for breeding purposes. Thus hundreds of pigs are imported annually into the Apa Tani country. However, if a man decides to breed from his sow and has no boar of his own, he borrows a young boar and shuts it up for a day or two in his pig sty. For this service he either pays the boar's owner a small fee or promises him one of the piglets. But Apa Tanis say that breeding spoils the flavour of pork and that sows that have littered are never as fat as those that have not ; they prefer therefore to fatten sows which have never given birth. Boars are castrated when two or three months old, and as none are set aside for breeding purposes such sows as are allowed to breed are inseminated by very young boars. Castration is effected by the removal of the testicles and this is one of the few tasks which Apa Tanis consider defiling. A special person known as *kenna*, usually a woman, performs the operation ; she has to live by herself in a house on the outskirts of the village, is subject to certain social and religious restrictions, but never wants for food or clothing : indeed her job is considered a lucrative one.

The pig is the sacrificial animal indispensable for all communal rites connected with agriculture and there is a good case for the assumption that it is older in Apa Tani culture than the mithan. Pork and bacon are more highly prized than any other meat, and

sides of bacon are not only the most acceptable gifts between friends and kinsmen, but are a recognized "currency" for ceremonial payments.

Fowls are kept by all Apa Tanis for the sake of their eggs as well as for their flesh. For the taking of omens and for innumerable minor sacrifices and offerings chickens are needed and on a bamboo structure erected on the occasion of a single sacrificial rite one may sometimes count as many as a hundred shells of eggs, broken in the course of the ritual. Required for so many vital purposes, chickens are therefore expensive. Two eggs count as a day's wage, a hen costs as much as a knife and a big cock as much as a short *dao* or simple cloth. At night chickens are shut into baskets or roost in the rafters, but during the day-time they run about the village, feeding mainly on refuse and the fallen grain from the winnowing fans and pounding blocks.

Dogs are of the ordinary pariah breed common all over the plains of Assam. The most frequent colouring is a reddish brown, but black white and piebald dogs are by no means rare. If the Apa Tanis ever had a distinct breed of dog (and it stands to reason that like the Nagas the tribes of the Eastern Himalayas did at one time possess dogs different from the mongrels of the Indian plains) the strain has been so diluted by interbreeding that the type is no longer recognizable. Many of the Apa Tanis going to the plains return with dogs, which they pick up for a nominal price, and this continuous influx of new blood must have ruined any indigenous race. Dogs are also bought from Daflas and Miris, but the canine population of the villages is kept down by the frequent use of dogs as sacrificial animals. Though Apa Tanis eat dog, few dogs are slaughtered only for the sake of their meat; they are the sacrificial animals proper to the rites performed by raiding parties and are accepted by the gods in times of sickness and personal disaster. The value of dogs in the Apa Tani country is therefore far higher than in the plains of Assam or among the neighbouring tribes.

Apa Tani dogs live on scraps and kitchen refuse, and few look at all well fed. They are not badly treated, living undisturbed in the houses, hunting with their masters and in the evening pressing with the children round the hearth fires, but the Apa Tani expects his dog to fend for himself and does not often give him a very substantial meal.

V

DIVISION OF LABOUR

An exhaustive discussion of the division and use of labour would lead us too far into the sphere of sociology, but agriculture cannot be entirely divorced from the human element and so we must consider not only by what methods the Apa Tani's land is cultivated, but also by whom the work on the fields is actually done.

In families of average means most of the work of fields and gardens is done by husband and wife and their children as well as any relative or slave who may be a member of the household. On some days this working unit engages on one task, but on others the members go about their different occupations necessary for the maintenance of their holding, the husband being mainly responsible for the building and up-keep of dams, terraces, channels and fences, for the digging over of fields and the planting of trees, and the wife being mainly occupied with the care of nurseries and gardens, the transplanting of rice and millet and the weeding of crops. But this division of labour is not complete, and on many occasions men and women work side by side, be it in building dams or in transplanting rice. Though a couple is normally quite capable of cultivating their land without outside help, there are yet many times when help is either sought or given by other members of the community.

From childhood every Apa Tani boy or girl belongs to a labour-gang (*patang*) and this association continues to some extent in later life. Thus a man who has to rebuild a rice terrace will ask some of his *patang* friends to help in the work, and in turn he will work on their fields whenever his assistance may be required. Similarly women often join forces in the tedious work of transplanting rice-seedlings, a group of four or five women working in turn on each other fields. No payment is made for such mutual assistance, but the person on whose field the group works is expected to provide a mid-day meal or at least a fair amount of rice bear for the labourers.

Whereas married men and women work only at times with the members of their old *patang*, boys and girls, from the age of seven or eight until they set up their own households, spend most of their working days with their own *patang*. All members of a *patang* are approximately of the same age and often of the same clan; there are girls and boys in a *patang* and if they are of the same clan, they are debarred from marriage. But in some *patang* there are girls and boys of different clans and there it happens quite often that working companions become lovers and marry when they grow up.

As a rule *patang* work in turn on the fields of their members' parents, and a man whose son or daughter has joined a *patang* has thus a right on the services of the entire *patang*, whenever his turn comes. These services are free, except that he has the obligation to provide the *patang* with a meal to be eaten on the fields. But rich men sometimes hire a *patang* out of turn for wages and then the hire is divided equally among all its members.

The hiring of *patang* is, however, only one of the means by which rich men obtain the labour necessary for the cultivation of their large holdings. Many poor men and women subsist entirely or at least to a large extent on the grain received as wages for daily

labour, and as rule they have little difficulty in finding employment. For although rich men have usually a number of slaves or dependents who work for them throughout the year, they often need additional labour to keep abreast with the agricultural calendar and complete the building of dams, transplanting and harvesting in proper season. The average daily wage is just under two seers of husked rice, and this is just enough to feed two persons for a day. Thus if a husband and wife both work for wages, they can support themselves and two or three children, but unless they engage in trade and go to work in the plains of Assam, it is almost impossible for them to better their position by saving and then acquiring land of their own. True, there is the reserve of clan-land where new terraces can still be carved from the hill-sides, but the really poor, who live from hand to mouth by daily labour, can seldom spare the time for the strenuous task of building new terraces.

Apa Tani agriculture depends thus both on the mutual help of the owners of small holdings and on the labour hired by the rich. Co-operative and capitalistic trends exist side by side and neither trend shows at present any sign of eliminating the other. The man of modest means who cultivates his fields with the help of his family and the *patang* of his children is not in danger of being ousted by the owner of a hundred fields, nor have the poor very much chance of effecting a more equal distribution of the existing land.

VI

THE ANNUAL CYCLE

Agriculture is the dominant factor in the Apa Tanis, life and a brief table of the work done month by month will demonstrate how the annual cycle revolves round agricultural pursuits.

We will begin with the month of *Kume*, corresponding to January-February, when the Apa Tanis make the preparations for the new cultivating season :

Kume :

(January-February) .. Repair work on the dams of terraces begins. Gardens are newly fenced and new groves planted. Manure is carried to fields and gardens. The cattle is allowed to wander over the fields. People go to work in the plains and to trade in Dafla and Miri villages. The Morum feast is celebrated with a ritual scattering of rice over the fields and phallic fertility dances ; individuals raise their prestige by slaughtering mithan. Rites in honour of the earth deity are performed. Young

men spend much time in hunting and trapping.

Kunje or Pagar-pule :

(Dam-building month)

(February-March)

.. Dams and channels are repaired and new terraces laid out. Rice is sown in the nurseries and millet in the seed beds. People go to work in the plains and to trade in Dafla and Miri villages.

In the villages whose turn it is to celebrate the Mloko, large stocks of firewood are accumulated, assembly platforms are rebuilt, posts for the festival are dragged in and erected. Hunting expeditions continue.

Mloko :

(March-April)

.. Gardens are prepared and maize, potatoes, taro, ginger, tobacco, spinach, marrow, cucumbers and chillies are sown. Fruit trees are planted. The repair work on terraces and the digging over of fields for the early rice continues.

The Mloko, the greatest Apa Tani festival, is celebrated by one of the three village groups. Pigs and fowls are sacrificed for the deities of earth and sky. When the rice seedlings sprout the Mlokung rite is performed. Hunting expeditions continue.

Haling :

(April-May)

.. .. The preparation of the irrigated fields is completed. The transplanting of rice begins and is usually completed except on a few outlying terraces. Millet is planted in gardens and on the rice bunds. The dry fields are dug over. The first green vegetables are ready for consume.

Inda :

(May-June)

.. .. The transplanting of the late rice and of all the millet is completed. Weeding begins. Some tobacco ripens. Many green vegetables are ready

for consume. Tomatoes, chillies and tobacco are transplanted.

Pöme or *Empu*:

(June-July) Weeding of the dry fields and the irrigated terraces continues. *Plare* rice and *mipa* millet come into ear. Vegetables including cucumbers and potatoes ripen.

The Dire rite is performed to protect the crops from insects.

Püje or *Milo*:

(July-August) *Plare* rice, *mipa* millet and *nire* maize are reaped and eaten in the first half of the month. *Plate* rice and *nite* maize are reaped and eaten in the second half of the month. Chillies ripen. Weeding of the late rice continues.

Halo:

(August-September) .. *Plaping* rice on the near fields and *nime tani* maize are reaped. Weeding of the late rice continues. The men collect wood against the time of the harvest when they are too busy to go cutting wood.

The Yapung rite is performed to protect the crops from hail.

Biinchi:

(September-October) .. *Plaping* rice on distant fields is reaped. Tomatoes and pulses ripen.

Bunte:

(October-November) .. The harvest of the late rice (*emo*) begins and is completed before the end of the month; the harvest of the late millet (*sarte*) is completed shortly after the rice harvest. All remaining vegetables and pulses are harvested. A few men go to the plains to sell chillies and buy salt.

Imo:

(November-December) There is no more work on the fields. The grain is stored in the granaries. Rice straw is collected and stacked as thatch. The cattle is brought in from outlying pastures and let loose on the fields.

Manure is carried to the fields and scattered. Houses are rebuilt and repaired. Women go to Dafla village to engage in weaving and to obtain cotton. Men go hunting and trapping in large numbers. Men begin going to the plains for work.

Nengko :

(December-January) .. Manure is carried to the fields. Houses are rebuilt and repaired. Pine trees are planted and groves laid out. Women go to Dafla villages to weave cloth and obtain cotton. People go to work in the plains and visit Dafla and Miri villages for purposes of trade. Wood is collected for the Morum feast. Hunting and trapping continue. . .

VII

CONCLUSIONS

The above notes do not exhaust the study of Apa Tani agriculture, a subject which if fully treated could easily fill a book. But scanty as our knowledge still is we can safely say that the Apa Tanis' agriculture is a very complex and elaborate system of cultivation, essentially different from the simple shifting cultivation of their Dafla and Miri neighbours. The Apa Tanis have developed the exploitation of their country to a high degree of efficiency and unlike many other cultivators they have succeeded in preserving indefinitely the fertility of the soil.

The fact that 20,000 Apa Tanis can subsist and maintain a comparatively high standard of living on less than twenty square miles of cultivable land speaks for itself and there can be no doubt that very few tribes can boast of such an achievement.

How it is that in an area where all other tribes follow as primitive a form of tillage as *jhum*-cultivation, the Apa Tanis alone should have developed such elaborate methods of intensive farming, is a question we cannot yet hope to answer. Mishmis, Abors, Miris and Daflas alike are *jhum*-cultivators and even the partly tibetanized Mönbas of the Dirang Dzong area have nothing to rival the Apa Tanis' system or rice cultivation. Indeed the nearest Assam hill-people whose agricultural methods are in any way comparable to those of the Apa Tanis are the Angami Nagas inhabiting the hills round Kohima over a hundred miles to the south-east and beyond the Brahmaputra valley. And even this similarity is very limited. The Angamis show extraordinary skill in cons-

tructing irrigated terraces following the contours of steep hill-slopes whereas the Apa Tanis concentrate mainly on the intensive cultivation of the valley-bottom and have nowhere attempted large scale cultivation along hill-slopes. The Apa Tanis' cultivation of perennial rice and their transplanting of millet has no parrallel anywhere in the Naga Hills, nor have the Angami Nagas gardens and groves comparable to those of the Apa Tanis. Yet there are elements common to Apa Tani and Naga culture, and though no direct connection need be assumed, there can be little doubt that both civilizations have some of their roots in the same culture sphere, a sphere, which despite the Tibeto-Burman languages now spoken by Apa Tanis and Nagas, is propably associated with the neolithic civilization of the Austronesian and Austroasiatic races. Certain elements in Apa Tani culture seem to be at home in the sub-tropical regions of Assam and Northern Burma rather than in the mountains of Southern Tibet, but influences from across the Great Himalayan Range may have reached the Apa Tanis no less than their Dafla and Miri neighbours. Elaborate irrigation has been observed among the Tibetans of Chayul Dzong, near the upper course of the Subansiri, barely 70 miles northwest of the Apa Tani country, and it would be premature to exclude an inspiration from that side from among the factors that may have contributed to the remarkable development of Apa Tani agriculture. Anthropological research in the Subansiri Region has only just begun and much work will have to be done before we can view Apa Tani culture in its proper perspective.

CYCLE-MIGRATION OF THE ZEMI NAGAS, NORTH CACHAR HILLS, ASSAM

BY U. V. GRAHAM BOWER (MRS F. N. BETTS)

The Zemi Nagas occupy two dissimilar areas in North Cachar. One is a part of the plateau west of Haflong, where there are some small settlements, and the other a hilly eastern tract covering the main Barail Range and its spurs and foothills. It is with this last that these notes are concerned.

The Barail Range here runs NE - SW. There is one peak of 6,100 ft. and several of over 5,000. To the north of the range lie unimportant spurs and some broken foothills, but on the south there is a wide stretch of major spurs and their subsidiary ridges, the whole country being extremely steep and much cut up by gorges and ravines.

When the first Zemi colonists arrived in the area from the north-east some three centuries ago, they found it virtually deserted and settled it without opposition. Their first settlements expanded and sent out colonies and these, with one or two fresh bands of immigrants, soon occupied all the available land. Because of the steep terrain the land suited to jhuming was strictly limited and confined to a few pockets in favoured places, and in order to hold enough to support itself each village had to control a large territory which was for the most part mountain and cliff.

This faced the settlers with a problem. In the state of war in which they lived small villages were defenceless and uneconomic, so the community could not sub-divide. Their village site must therefore be large, be naturally strong, have a good water-supply, lie at a healthy altitude, and yet be reasonably near all the fields. The first four conditions might be fulfilled by one or two sites in their territory, but with their jhum-land in scattered patches miles apart, no one site could fulfil the last.

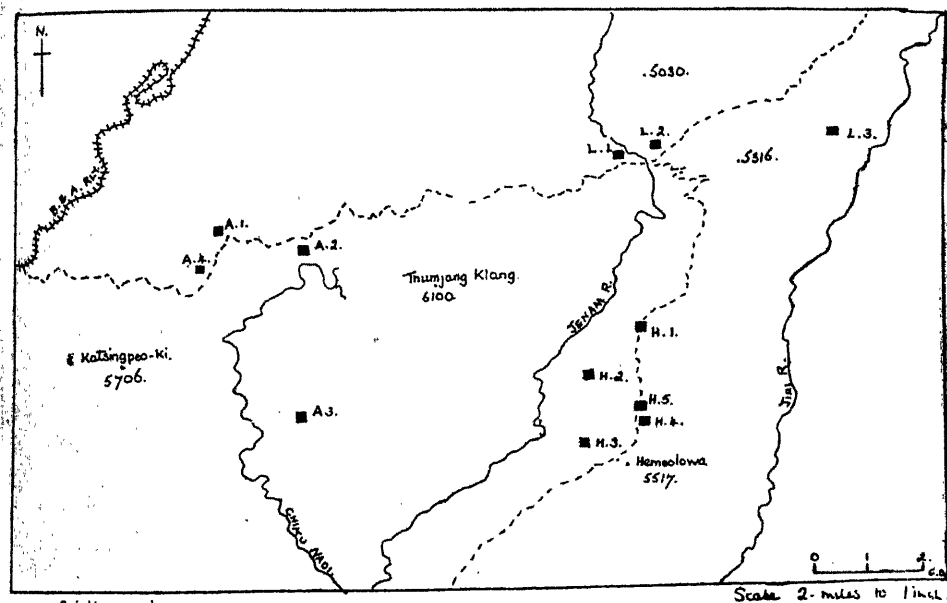
From the very beginning the Zemi found the answer in cycle-migration. It was an unusual solution forced upon them by the country, and they are at present the only Naga tribe known to follow the system. The Naga is pre-eminently a builder of permanent villages, and it is this which distinguishes him from the Kuki; it may be noted that Zemi villages are actually permanent in form, with considerable stone monuments and defences and houses requiring much constructional labour; 'morungs' may have roof beams more than 100 feet long and front posts four feet in diameter and thirty feet high, and private houses are also solidly built.

The first village would be on a suitable site near one of the patches of jhum land. An elaborate ritual accompanied the founding and certain rights in the land passed to the colonists and particularly to their leader, who, though not a chief, held an extremely strong position in the community. The land was cleared and cultivated in rotation in the ordinary way, but as there was not enough to allow the normal cycle, it was cropped at short intervals until

it became exhausted, which usually took several generations. The village then moved—sometimes in dribblets but more often in a body—to another suitable site near a patch of fresh jhum land and there founded a new settlement and began a new round of cultivation.

The old site was in no sense abandoned. Defences, house-platforms and monuments were left intact, rights in house-sites and land were jealously retained and property was occasionally buried to mark a given place for re-occupation. (When the Impoi community moved to the Asalu site about a century ago, the ancestor of one Rintening buried a stone-bowled pipe by his hearth, but his descendants, who led a colony back there in 1937, have not so far located the relic.) When in the course of another fifty years or so the land on the second site was exhausted and the community wished to return to their original position, where the land was now thoroughly recovered, the move must be led, the omens taken and the proper ceremonies performed by the descendants of the original leader, and they and the rest of the villagers resumed their ancestors' rights where these had been left in abeyance several generations before.

MAP TO SHOW SITES (OCCUPIED AND FALLOW) OF THE ASALU, LAISONG AND HANGRUM ZEMI NAGA COMMUNITIES.



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A large village with extensive territory might have three, four or five sites to which the community moved in rotation, each a valid settlement subject to well-defined rights of ownership and each with a distinctive name by which the community was known while there. Hangrum, probably the oldest and at present the largest Barail Zemi community, has four sites besides the one it now occupies, Laisong has three, and Asalu, Peisia, Haijaichak and Khangnam all have at least two, but whatever variations different villages showed the principle of cycle-migration remained the same and was followed uninterruptedly until the end of the nineteenth century.

From the seventeenth century up till then there had been no fresh settlement in the area. When some of the north-eastern Zemi moved out before Angami pressure, they found the Barail in North Cachar fully occupied and passed on to settle the western plateau. But now Kuki immigrants appeared; small, shifting communities, they practised a form of jhum cultivation which took them ever on in search of new land to replace that exhausted. Their first few squatters did not trouble the Zemi much, but when more came and British control checked their onward movement, many Kuki villages became fixed on fallow Zemi sites, and when village boundaries were laid down the peculiar Zemi system was not understood, their sites were presumed abandoned and awarded with their land to the Kuki newcomers, and the Zemi were left with only that part of their land which was in cultivation when the boundaries were demarcated.

The results were serious. The land which had just sufficed for the Zemi was now carrying a bigger population than it could support. Progressive over-cultivation followed, with endless encroachments, land disputes, tribal friction, and steady deforestation and degeneration of what jhum-land there was. To-day in the Laisong area the forest has receded to the highest tops, the whole of the upper Jenam valley is under light scrub and thatching-grass and the river has become liable to sudden and violent flood, and even the thatching-grass areas are cultivated at five-year intervals. Laisong moved to their present site 30 years ago, but have lost so much of their land thereto the Kukis that they are already cultivating their fallow area six miles away, so that this too is involved in the general exhaustion. At Asalu conditions are already acute. This community had two other sites, Impoi and Gariloa, with a large tract of land attached to each. All of Gariloa and most of Impoi's land has passed to the Kukis, and, unfortunately, just as Asalu were due to move, so that although they carried out a partial migration to Impoi the good land there has been lost and the community is stranded on old land which needs to lie fallow for some generations; it has so deteriorated in the last twenty years that the village is now constantly on the edge of famine and unless action is taken the same fate must overcome Laisong and eventually the whole of the Barail area.

SERPENT-WORSHIP IN KERALA

BY L. K. BALA RATNAM

INTRODUCTION

Kerala, forming the extreme south-west portion of the Indian Peninsula, in which are included the States of Travancore, Cochin, as also the District of Malabar in the Madras Presidency, is the proud possessor of primitive institutions of a type peculiarly fascinating to the ethnologist. Of the various kinds of primitive worship still practised in the country, that of the serpent occupies a prominent place. No animal, and certainly no reptile, has probably played such a pre-eminent part in human life and thought as snakes and serpents have done. They have attracted so much universal attention that there are many things regarding them of which one would like to know more. 'The animal is dreaded and revered on account of the mysterious dangers associated with it, its stealthy habits, the cold fixity of its gaze, its sinuous motion, the protrusion of its forked tongue, and the suddenness and deadliness of its attacks.'¹ The earliest episode in the Bible has a snake in it: and this creature was responsible for the first disobedience and fall of man. And it is claimed that long before the ancient Hebrews wrote this story, the Hindus had bestowed much thought upon the snake. Hindu mythology tells us that 'the entire globe is supported, not upon the shoulders of the mighty giant Atlas as the Greeks had imagined, but upon the raised head of a huge serpent.'² The extraordinary intelligence of snakes has impressed mankind even more than their enormous strength.

THE NAGA RACE

The earliest civilization in Southern India is ascribed to the Dravidians, who, as many authorities consider, came from Northern India. They are supposed to have been displaced by the Aryans and it is also believed that colonies were established by them in Southern India long before the Aryans came to India. The inscriptions of the 10th and 11th centuries reveal in a remarkable way that the then ruling chiefs of the kingdoms in Southern India belonged primarily to the Naga Race, and held the serpent banner, and that a part of Canara was called the territory of the Naga people. Further, the foundation of the earliest settlements in Ceylon is ascribed to these people. Though they had settled in the South, they never abandoned their possessions in the North of India. From these and other facts, it is concluded that the Dravidians, the dark-skinned race, belong to the Naga Race. At a later period, though much of the old religion and mode of life was retained, the worship of the Brahmanical deities was also introduced. The worship of the hooded serpent is general among the Dravidians of South India.

¹ L. K. A. Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, p. 473.

² D. S. Gordon, *Snakelore* (Hindu, 1941).

Donald Mackenzie points out that when serpent worship became prevalent among the Aryans the Nagas were regarded as demigods. They were occasionally the 'friends of man' and to those favoured they gave draughts of their nectar, which endowed them with great strength. Their city was the paradise of serpent-worshippers. Manasa, sister of Vasuka, King of the Nagas, gives protection against snake-bites, and is invoked by the serpent-worshippers.¹

SERPENT WORSHIP: A MASS CULT

All classes of Hindus venerate the serpent, and men and women worship it in every part of India. There is no reason to suppose that serpent-worship is purely a high-class cult. When the Aryans penetrated into South India, they came face to face with a people who had already attained a degree of perfection in the realms of art and thought. The worship of the snake and idols had attained a vast popularity, so much so it is quite possible to hold that the Dravidians did not borrow serpent-worship from elsewhere. The Aryans evidently purified the indigenous faith and welded it into a common cult; and Nagas came to occupy a subordinate place in the Hindu pantheon. The similarity between the two cults and modes of worship lends support to the view held by some students of history that 'the Aryans were only the sons of the soil and not aliens who migrated into India.'²

ORIGIN OF SERPENT-WORSHIP

Serpent-worship is of a very complicated character, but in it can be distinguished the direct adoration of the snake—the most terrible and mysterious of all the enemies of men; a worship of the deities of the waters, springs and rivers symbolized by the waving form of the serpent; and conceptions of the same kind as that of Vedic Ahi (the weather demon) and connected closely with the great myth of the storm and the struggle of light with darkness.³ All kinds of myths, and folk-tales are associated with it; but nowhere in the world is the serpent-cult so widely distributed or developed in more varied and interesting forms as in India. In *Keralolpathi*, the following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents. The first Aryan colonists brought by Parasurama found Kerala, the newly reclaimed land, completely uninhabitable and unimprovable. They therefore abandoned it and came back to their old and good country. No sooner did they return than the Nagas (serpent gods) of the subterranean world took immediate possession of the abandoned country. On their second venture, the colonists finding the Nagas in their lands declared war against them. In the battle both

¹ Donald A. Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend* (London, N. D.), p. 66.

² Q. J. M. S., Vol. XXII, No. 4, p. 424.

³ W. Aziz, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1941.

parties fought valiantly. The gravity of the fight necessitated the acting of Parasurama as the arbitrator in which he decided in favour of the colonists and gave orders to the effect that the south-west corner of every occupied compound should be set apart as an abode for snakes as household gods. He supplemented the above command by ordaining that such allotted localities in which these serpent gods are placed, were to remain virgin ground, 'untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork,' thus permitting the creepers and underwood therein to grow luxuriantly plentiful. Hence the origin of the name *kavu* (grove) for such a place.

AN ORGANIZED CULT

The Naga worship looks like an organized cult and is more general in Kashmir and Southern India though it exists in almost all places. 'The Naga cult or the exclusive worship of the serpent,' says P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, 'originally arose probably in the hilly tracts which man inhabited early in the course of his evolution... After the cults of Siva and Vishnu arose, several people remained primarily Naga worshippers without joining these other cults and were therefore distinguished from the rest of the population by being specially called Nagas.'¹

SERPENT-KAVUS (Groves)

Round about Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, more especially inwards, three or more stones are to be found together, having representations of serpents carved upon them. These stones are erected always under the sacred fig tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) by pious persons, whose piety determines the care and finish with which they are executed. Judging from the number of these stones, the worship of the serpent appears to be more prevalent in Southern India than in other parts. Ward and Conner, about a century ago, estimated the number of serpent *kavus* (groves) as 15,000. Since then, the number must certainly have increased. They are dedicated to minor deities—deities like Nagarajas, Nagathans, Sasthas or Ghandarvas.

EMBLEMS OF IMMORTALITY

Serpents are regarded as emblems of immortality and are worshipped chiefly by the Nayars. Some think that the top-knot of a Nayar is symbolical of the serpent's hood.² In the compounds of almost every Nayar house in the States of Cochin and Travancore are to be found serpent shrines.³ Their worship occupies

¹ P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils*, p. 91.

² T. K. Krishna Menon, *Dravidian Culture of Kerala*, pp. 75-76.

³ There is a theory which connects the origin of the Nayar with Naga (serpent) worship. This theory is suggestive of the nature of the country in which the community lives. From *Nagar* the word *Nayar* is supposed to have been derived. Some scholars identify *Nayanmar* with *Naganmar*, the plural form of *Nayar* and *Naga* respectively and consider the latter as the Proto-Dravidians.

an important place in the religious life of the Nayars and other castes like the Izhuvans and others. The serpent grove is an indispensable adjunct to every Nayar house and the 9th day of every month is specially selected for worship when offerings of fruits, milk and water are made to the serpents. The shrines are called *Chitrakudam* (Nagakotta) and if they are not properly respected, the serpents exercise an evil influence.

THE NAYADIS OF MALABAR

The serpent shrines are objects of veneration to all the Hindus including the Parayas and Pulayas. Every Hindu would shudder at approaching a serpent grove in a state of pollution. It would be an act of desecration to do so or to destroy any vegetation in a serpent grove. But the Nayadi of Malabar 'is not disturbed by such qualms of conscience. He is driven by desperation to the necessity of occupying the serpent groves and destroying all vegetation and the deities installed therein. He is therefore found occupying small patches of land which were once serpent groves in the midst of a predominantly Hindu population.'¹

WORSHIPPED BY WOMEN

The sacred serpent shrines have the appearance of miniature reserved forests. Rees observes that 'a good snake shrine is as much an attraction in the case of a house on the Malabar coast as a garden in the case of a villa at Hampstead or Harrow.'² To the prosperity and well-being of each and every householder, worship of serpents is considered essential. Scholars like Mackenzie, Crawford, Cornish, and Rees have recorded that neglect of the worship, intentionally or unintentionally, causes leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia. The snake is evidently a bringer of good luck and prosperity. In some parts it is regarded as powerful to procure offspring, and for this reason is worshipped by women; it is again, in some parts, the tutelary deity of the house. The latter idea is almost universal.

As Cornish wrote in 1871, 'So long as the desire of offspring is a leading characteristic of Indian people, so long will the worship of serpent, or of snake stones, be a popular cult.'³ In South India even to-day it is a custom for the barren and the childless to propitiate the serpent deity by performing the ceremony called *Nagapratishta* or consecration of a Naga or stone idol representing the serpent god, generally under the Asvatha tree, in the hope of getting issue. If a child is born, it is given an appropriate name, such as Nagappa, Subbana, Naganathan or Nagamma. Sterility in women is ascribed to *sarpa sapa* (the curse of the serpent), either in this life or in the previous one. Every village

¹ L. A. Krishna Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, p. 54.

² *The Nineteenth Century*, 1904.

³ E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), p. 283.

has one or two Asvatha trees close to the tank or river with a number of such idols placed on the masonry platform around. And in the morning, when the earth is bathed in the rosy pallor of the dawning day, one can see women after bathing going round the sacred tree muttering prayers. Some make images of snakes and drop them in wells after worship for the same purpose. Women of the lower classes worship serpents after marriage on the Gopuja day, in the Tamil month of *Thai*. No names of serpent gods are used in folk-worship, though in the Puranas the eight serpents (*Ashṭa Nagas*) go by the names of Anantha, Vasuki, Karkotaka, Pingalaka, Sanka, Padma, Mahapadma, and Daksaha.

SERPENTS AND AGRICULTURE

Serpents are held sacred and worshipped also by the agricultural communities in South India. They are believed to contribute to the fertility of the soil and the health of the cattle. It is probably for this reason that a large number of priests in serpent temples come from the agriculturists like Padayachis (Vanniyakula Kshatriyas). Serpents are believed to build their nests in places where there are springs of underground water. The presence of water-springs at a small depth generally contributes to the fertility of the soil. Moreover, the serpents build their nests in fine pulverized soil. Such a soil must certainly contribute to its fertility.

WORSHIP OF LIVE SERPENTS

Living serpents are worshipped in some places. There is a Siva temple at Thirukalacheri near Tranquebar. In the temple there is a lingam (Naganatha) which is covered by an ant-hill. The daily worship consists, beside other things, in placing a bowl of milk in front of the lingam to be sucked up by the serpent. The priest withdraws to allow the serpent to drink the milk. Worshipers also pour milk into the ant-hill, and a hissing noise resembling that of a snake sucking the milk is heard. The serpent is an old one and does not harm anybody. It quietly withdraws into the ant-hill at the approach of men. This was witnessed by Mr R. K. Aiyar some 46 years ago.¹

AT MANNARSALA IN TRAVANCORE

At Mannarsala² in Central Travancore, there is not only a big serpent *kavu*, of great age and repute but also quite a large number of serpents which are worshipped and fed with milk. This *kavu* is owned by a Nambiyadi who belongs to a high caste Hindu almost equal to Brahmans. In ancient days a member of this

¹ R. K. Iyer, *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 426.

² *Mannarsala* means the 'unburnt ground.' This refers to an ancient tradition that when the great *Khandava-vanom* was burnt by *Agni*, the god of fire, this small oasis was spared on the prayer of the serpents, who were the progeny of the serpent offspring to the lady of this *Illam*.

*Illum*¹ married a girl from another *Illum* where the serpents were held in great veneration. The parents of this girl were poor and they could not afford to give any money as dowry. The girl was therefore given the stone-figure of a serpent which she was enjoined to worship just as she was doing in her own *Illum*. She brought the dowry to her husband's house after the marriage and used to perform the puja. In course of time she became pregnant and was delivered of a male baby and a snake. As she came from a family of serpent worshippers the snake-baby was also taken special care of and brought up in a cellar of the house. With the birth of the male child and his companion, the *Illum* prospered immensely. The woman and the snake were believed to be the cause of the affluence of the family, and to this day to the surname of the male members of that *Illum* are added, by way of distinction, the name of the serpent god and that of the female.

In course of time the snake had a large family which could not be accommodated in the underground cellar, the original home of the snake. A new *kavu* was grown where in the bushes the snakes found a comfortable home. Two stone figures, the king and queen, called Nagaraja and Nagayakshi were installed there. Regular pujas were performed. The temple became popular and ladies in and about the place resorted to it for worship. Those desirous of getting a child used to bring a stone-figure and instal it in the grove and perform worship in the prescribed manner. In this family, the original home of snake-worship, it is a female member who performs the puja on the particular days. Even now there is the practise of offering *noorum palum* once a year, that is, on the day following the great Hindu festival of Maha Sivaratri, in the cellar of the house, as well as in the grove where the stone images are placed. This *noorum palum* is made of rice flour, saffron powder, cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, fruit

¹ This word is applied to the family of a Nampudhiri, the most sacerdotal among the Brahmins of Malabar.

In 1891 the head of this *Illum* was Vasuki Sridevi Krishnan Nambiyadi. Every male member of this family is called even to this day Vasuki, 'the deified hero of the Naga people.'

The snake-godlings of Northern India are considered as the servants of Vasuki. *Sridevi* is a female name and represents the original lady who brought the dowry of stone idol to the temple. *Nambiyadi* was the name of the proprietor and *Nambiyadi* was his caste name. Divine honour are paid to the Naga demi-gods as ancestors, and among these ancestors of the Dravidians are the Nagarajas, who are also worshipped as ancestors by their descendants in North India.

The celebrated iron pillar at Delhi is connected with Vasuki. It was driven down deep into the earth so that it might rest on his head, because a Brahman told the King that only this engineering feat would secure the stability of his kingdom. But the King was doubtful; he had the pillar dug up; its base was set with the blood of the serpent monarch. The King's incredulity in the iron pillar never again being firmly fixed led to the consequent downfall of his dynasty. (L. K. B.)

of the *kadali* plantain, and ghee, It is placed, for the snake first born, covered with a piece of silk cloth. The door of the cellar is closed so that no one may see what takes place inside. Even the crevices are covered. Three days after this, the vessel of *noorum palum* is taken and whatever remains is thrown into the tank as unfit for human consumption. Every month on the *Ayiliam* day Pulluvans come and sing and dance and these snakes are worshipped by the same kind of offering along with cooked rice. The King and Queen of serpents (images) are washed every morning, and an offering of fruit and milk is made to them; at noon offerings of *Vellanivediam* (cooked rice) and afterwards of fried grain (*malar*) follow. But on the *Ayiliam* day in the month of *Alpasi* (October-Nov.) large crowds of worshippers attend, sometimes thousands, when a big procession is arranged, headed by the eldest female member carrying the idol of Nagaraja. The procession starts from the grove to the *Illum* of the Nambiyadi. The festival takes place every year with great pomp and ceremony. On the day previous to the *Ayiliam* ceremonial, a grand feast is given to the Brahmans.

The *Kavu* (grove) has immense endowments of landed property from the revenues of which the annual and other festivals are conducted. The thousands of worshippers who attend make their offerings in the shape of cash, gold, jewels, ghee, cocoanuts, grains, pepper, salt and such. All these articles are sold and the proceeds credited to temple accounts. It is said that, whenever the pujas are not performed, with the strictest personal purity or care to small details, the serpent gods get offended. Large cobras appear from the underground cellars and this is supposed to be a definite indication of their displeasure.

A SERPENT IN ANGER

A serpent rampant in anger is one of the most terrifyingly beautiful sights in the world. As a rule, serpents do not bite, unless they are provoked. No orthodox person would ever kill or hurt serpents even if bitten by them. For, it is a common belief that those who intentionally or unintentionally injure them would be chastised by leprosy, itch, childlessness, or ophthalmia.

In some of the villages of Kerala people seem to be quite at home with them, for they do not get put out when they see these reptiles. This must be a novel spectacle to European travellers, like the correspondent to the *Madras Mail* who once wrote—

‘It was not till I chanced upon a cobra farm in Travancore that I became aware how these reptiles are revered and encouraged.

‘It was a hot sultry day in May, and I had, after a hard day’s climbing, halted at the Engineer’s camp-shed at the Christian village of Panthipalli. My things had been delayed at an unbridged river 8 miles away, as I subsequently dis-

covered, and so after sitting an hour in the uninviting shed, I determined to seek other quarters, for the reason that I heard ominous rustlings in the half-decayed that of the roof, and a suspicious sampering of rats suggestive of the presence of snakes. There was also a hole or two in the cowedged floor which gave me vivid ideas of cobras, so I made up my mind to leave the place. About half a mile from the bungalow was a kind of parsonage, and I was turning my steps thither when a Sudra, noticing my travel-stained condition, courteously inquired into my difficulty and invited me to his place. I accepted his invitation and followed him into his compound. . . . The host signified that I could make myself comfortable in the gate-house. The furniture was scarce, but quite sufficient for my requirements. After dinner I dropped asleep, and slept soundly till 7 next morning. As soon as I was dressed, I came outside to stretch my limbs and to chat with my host. After a short walk we returned, and as I was near the house, I noticed that the wooden building of the Sudra mentioned above was riddled about the basement with holes. Seeing that I looked curiously at these, my host said in a low and reverential tone: "Serpents." "What!" I said, "you mean to say you have got your place filled with snakes, and you brought me here?" And I told I would leave at once. My Sudra friend said: "The snakes won't harm you, sir, and see, my children are in the house, and don't for a moment think that you run any risk." The mention of the children drew my attention to the fact that several little children were playing about in the building which my host said belonged to the cobras for three generations. He did not know how many cobras there were, but the whole place underneath and all about was undermined, and he often placed eggs and milk for the cobras, which were quite harmless, and from outside many offerings were made to the serpents.

'As I was talking to the Sudra, he called my attention to a young cobra which had emerged from one of the numerous holes and was lying quite still in the shade of the house; gradually some half a dozen or more came out and glided about the well and other places, the children quietly moving out of their way and not interfering with them in the least. This was too much of my equanimity; and bidding my well-meaning host 'good morning,' I cleared off to the parsonage, where the native Christian pastor made me comfortable for the day.'

But this correspondent seems to have rightly gauged popular opinion on the subject, for he wrote in the same paper:

'It was the conviction of many that so long as the cobras occupied the house, so long would the owner enjoy the good

things of this world and be prosperous ; but should a cobra bite any one in his household, or should the snakes leave his place altogether, then adversity would overtake him.'

PAMBUMEKAT NAMPUDHIRI

One striking phase of serpent worship in Kerala relates to the family of *Pambumekkat Nampudiris* and the singular and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. They live in a house full of cobras and their powers are handed down from father to son. 'The inmates of the house can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family, the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nampudhiri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.'¹ And the *Cochin Census Report* states, 'The Pambumekkat Nambudhiri, in whose house the cobras are fed and nursed, is believed to be proof against their bite and poison. He is the special priest at certain sacrifices offered to the serpents.'² Whenever from a serpent grove an image of the serpent has to be shifted to another place he is sent for, there is the belief that he alone can do it after propitiation and acts of worship with offerings. For this removal, if any tree has to be felled, it can only be used by him and nobody else. The sanctity of the shrine is zealously preserved. If it is polluted either by the contact of low-caste or non-caste people, or Hindus under death pollution, or by women during their menses, a member of the family of the Nambudhiri priest is informed and purificatory ceremonies are performed. It is a common belief that the pollution of a grove by a woman in her menses would cause the serpents to vacate the *kavu*, because of the impurity. For removing such an infection Pulluvans are asked to sing songs in serpent groves and execute certain ceremonies to cause the serpents to re-enter the shrines.

PAMBANTHULLAL

In former days, snakes were considered a part of the property. It is said that a certain family once sold their ancestral home to an individual, who cut down in the snake grove, and planted it up. Soon some members of the vendor's family began to suffer from cutaneous disorders. The aid of the astrologer was solicited. He ascribed the ailment to the indignation of the aggrieved snakes. Today, when a family, in Malabar, is troubled by the presence of

¹ T. K. Gopal Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, p. 124.

² Rev. Mateer, *Travancore and Its People*, p. 87.

snakes on the premises or when members thereof are suffering from cutaneous or other disorders the astrologer is called in, and, if the anger is believed to be the primary cause of the infliction, a ceremony called *Pambanthullal* (snake jumping) or *Nagapatto* is performed. The ceremony is a long complicated one in which a Pulluvan, whose caste is said to be descended from the snake deity, acts as the officiating priest. On the day fixed, a particular portion of the house is cleansed and on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. Rice flour is employed to draw the figures; the spaces between are filled with burnt rice husk, turmeric etc. Then a number of other accessories are required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts such as rice, boiled in milk and sweetened with sugar. These are properly arranged and puja is performed by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*. A female member of the afflicted family who has fasted during the day, bathes, and sits on the floor. Her hair is untied and she holds in her hands a bunch of cocoanut flowers. The Pulluvan plays on his earthen pot-drum, while a Pulluva woman keeps time with the music by striking a metal vessel. Both man and woman at the same time sing songs in honour of the serpent deity. Thus the serpent gods are propitiated and, in consequence, they manifest themselves in the body of the woman sitting. The entrance of the gods into her body is characterized by a fearful concussion of her whole frame, gradually developing into a ceaseless shaking, particularly of the upper parts. She moves backwards and forwards with the cocoanut flowers. She begins to speak and her words are regarded as expressions of the gods' will. She rubs away the figures drawn, and bathes again. The snake deity will, it is believed not manifest itself if any of the persons or articles required for the ceremony are impure, *e.g.*, if the pot-drum has been polluted by the touch of a menstruating woman.

'AN HONOURABLE GUEST'

In the Punjab hills, every householder keeps an image of the Naga (serpent) which prevents a venomous snake entering the house. In other places the benevolent household snake is the soul of some deceased ancestor. In the Madras Presidency, the snake is considered an honourable guest and even if a whole family were in danger of losing their lives, no one member would be bold enough to lay sacriligious hands on such an honoured inmate. Some say the appearance of a snake in a house portends evil. It is also said to remind one of a forgotten vow to God Subramanya or Sasta. Mateer has recorded that 'when Sudras observe a snake, they catch it by a cord with a noose tied to the end of a

long cord, place it carefully in an earthen pot, and bring it to the place of worship. Should they find others killing these sacred reptiles, they earnestly beg for their protection, or lavish abuses on the persons who have committed that sacriligious act.'¹

PRESENTATION OF IMAGES

Brahmins in Kerala worship silver representations of Vishnu trampling a serpent under his feet. They also present such images of serpents made of gold or silver and consecrated for worship to Brahmans when an eclipse falls on their date of birth. This is done primarily to deprecate the anger of Rahu.

The following hymns occur in the daily *Sandhya* worship of a Brahman and are supposed to ward off serpents :

नर्मदायै नमःप्रातः नर्मदायै नमो निशि ।
नमोस्तु नर्मदे तुभ्यम् त्राहिमां विषसर्पतः ॥ (1)

जरत्कारो जरत्कारो समुत्पन्नो महायशाः ।
अस्तीक सत्यसंधो मां पन्नगेभ्योऽभिरक्षतु ॥ (2)

अपसर्प सर्प भद्रं ते दूरं गच्छ महायशाः ।
जनमेजयस्य यज्ञान्ते अस्तीक वचनं स्मरन् ॥ (3)

1 'O Narmada (Goddess) I bow to thee every morning and evening May thou save me from the poisonous snake !

2 'O Astika, son of Jaratkaru (a great sage who married a sister of Vasuki), O far-famed true one ! protect me from snakes.

3 'O glorious snake, may good come to thee ! Remember the words of Astika at the end of Janamejaya's sacrifice, and go far away from me'.

MARRIAGE BETWEEN ASVATHA & NIM TREES : ITS SIGNIFICANCE

'The connexion of the Nagas with the Asvatha and Nim trees is evidently a relic of the ancient tree-and-serpent-worship. Serpents have been worshipped in India from very early times, earlier even perhaps, than the Vedic Sun, Moon, and Brahma.'² The Asvatha tree is Vishnu and is said to represent the Aryan cult. The Nim tree is sacred to Goddess Mariamma and is said to be Dravidian. Serpents are sacred to both, and worship of the stone image of the serpent at the foot of the Asvatha and Nim trees will propitiate both deities. In the so-called marriage of the two trees, says a great author, one finds a unification of the two cults—Aryan and Dravidian—and the common efforts of both to propitiate the serpent and ward off its evil.

ASSOCIATION OF SERPENTS WITH SUBRAMANIA, SASTA AND MARIAMMA

Serpents are associated closely with god Subramania. As Krishna Sastri points out, in some unexplained way there exists

1 H. Krishna Sastri, *South Indian Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 250-251.

an intimate connexion between the worship of Subramanya and of the serpent. 'The common name Subba or Subbaraya found among the Telugu, Canarese, and Tamil people is explained to be both a contraction of Subramania and a synonym for serpent. The sixth day of a lunar month (*Shashthi*) is held as peculiarly sacred to Subramania, as to the serpent God. His riding on a peacock, his marriage with the forest maid Valliamman, and the fact that his most famous temples are on the hill-tops, show that he is connected with the ancient tree-and-serpent worship and the sylvan deities.'¹ It may be noted that the day *Shashthi* sacred to serpent worship in Kerala is celebrated by feeding *brahmacharis* and presenting cloths to them. And as another writer points out in the course of a very valuable contribution to the *Mythic Society Journal*, 'the association of the serpents with Subramanya is probably due to the fact that it is the favourite element of Lord Siva.'²

Serpents are also closely associated with Sasta (Ayyanar) and Mariamma. The goddess Mariamma is a Dravidian deity and her emblem is the serpent. Serpents build their nests in the shrines of Ayyanar and Mariamma, as probably they are situated outside village limits.

Sasta is another name for Ayyanar. He is the son of Hari (Vishnu as Mohini) and Hara (Siva) according to the Puranic legends. Sasta has long been a popular deity in South India. The name Sattan found in ancient Tamil works is no other than Sasta (Ayyanar) and villages are named after the God. Ayyanar may, therefore, be regarded as one of the ancient deities and he represents the unification of the two cults Aryan and Dravidian.³

SERPENT WORSHIP: AN ANCIENT CULT

Serpent worship has been an ancient cult not only among the Hindus but among many other races all the world over. In ancient India the Nagas appear to have been the chief serpent worshipping tribe. Many persons, families, and races have claimed Naga descent, 'not only physical but spiritual, and not only in India but also in Greece and the Far East.' In the Beas Valley and other adjacent localities, there are many tribes who worship hooded serpents and profess to belong to the old Solar Race. The Red Indians of North-America used to worship the terrible rattlesnake in their temples; and the Aztecs of Mexico and South America similarly paid homage to other serpents peculiar to those regions. The ancient Egyptians are known to have included the snakes among the object of their worship, nearly ten thousand years ago, and possibly it is from them that the Hebrews in Palestine, the followers of Zarathusthra in Persia, and the votaries of the Naga in India have all acquired some of their snakelore.

¹ *ibid.*, p. 177.

² *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. XXII.

³ L. K. Bala Ratnam, *Sasta Worship in South India*, pp. 81-93.

EXCHANGE SERVICE

Before the war *Man in India* maintained an exchange-service with numerous scientific institutions and learned societies, but owing to the interruption of communications and the general shortage of paper this interchange of publications fell into abeyance. With communications restored throughout the greater part of the world and scientific activity resumed in many centres of learning, it is now desirable to restart this service by which scholars abroad are kept in touch with anthropological studies in this country and the publications of foreign institutions become available to Indian research workers.

In order that such publications may be available to a wider circle of scholars, the Editors of *Man in India* have arranged that in future free exchange-copies will be sent out by the Osmania University of Hyderabad-Deccan and that all publications received in exchange will be incorporated in the anthropological library of that university.

Institutions interested in anthropology, ethnology, folklore, prehistory, linguistics and allied subjects are invited to avail themselves of this service and to send copies of their periodicals in exchange for copies of *Man in India*. All inquiries and communications relating to such an exchange as well as copies of journals and periodicals should be addressed to :

Dr C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, Ph.D.,
Professor of Anthropology in the Osmania University,
Hyderabad-Deccan, India.

But articles for publication, subscriptions, books for review and general correspondence should *not* be sent to Hyderabad, but to the Editors of *Man in India* as usual.

NOTES AND QUERIES

KITE-FLYING

Kite-flying took a heavy toll of casualties in Ahmedabad on *Makar-sankranti* day, as is usual every year. One person is reported to have died and about a dozen others injured as the result of falls from roofs of houses while flying kites. One more person died and nine others were injured in a free fight, connected with kite-flying, in which brickbats and roof-tiles were freely used. (*A.P.I.*) Contrast Elwin, *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, p. 53.

SANTAL SONGS

The Asiatic Folk Literature Society (Vol. I, No. 1, 1944) contains a note on Santal Songs by W. J. Culshaw. It is greatly to be hoped that a collection of Santal songs in the various districts of Bengal will be undertaken on a wide scale.

Even those who are interested can scarcely yet be said to be aware of the rich and varied heritage of such people as the Santals: the material for a comprehensive collection does not at the moment exist in spite of "Hor Seren" published by the present Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas, Mr W. G. Archer, whose translations of Uraon poetry are well known. A far greater number of people should be concerned about the collecting of the songs, as well as of other aspects of the folk literature of the Santals; such collections can throw light on many different aspects of primitive culture and the cultural history of India generally. The key to understanding them, however, is not to be found in the formulation of some sociological or psychological theory, but a recognition of the simple fact that the Santals sing primarily because they enjoy singing.

A large proportion of the songs are spontaneous in composition and therefore ephemeral. On any moonlight night, when work is slack, the younger adults of a Santal village gather together to sing the songs classed as "Lagre" and "Porob." The meaning of the latter word is obvious; most of the songs are classified according to the rhythm of the type of dance or dance cycle with which they are associated. There are for example many different types of "Lagre" rhythm. New and topical songs are continually being composed to give poetic expression to the new experiences of the group. The coming of the railway was celebrated in song; now it is the experiences of war, and the sound of bombs. Such songs are usually little more than "snatches." Here are one or two examples:—

As I passed down the village street,
My feet became entangled
In the tendrils of a creeper;
I bent down to loose myself,
My lover touched my hand.

The water has risen,
In the river
O Bhagavan,
Get me over.

In Asansol
The electric lights
Look sweet, sweet.

The birds of the forest are crying,
They cry in different tones, love.
The fish cry softly, love,
My soul cries for you.

Mostly sung with the accompaniment of dancing, such songs are also heard at other times, sung by women as they weed in the fields or wend their way home after a market day. The words are composed without effort, but melodies are more stable, with considerable local variations.

'By means of songs the Santals also keep alive the memory of past events. Many classes of songs might almost be described as history in memorable form. One can analyse "history" into component tradition, legend or myth, but it is not at all clear how far the Santals themselves differentiate these differing elements, or whether they do so at all. This is true of many of the songs sung at the time of different festivals, particularly the great festivals, of Springtime and Harvest, and the songs sung at crises in individual life, such as initiation and marriage. Each festival, and each occasion has its own appropriate cycle of dances, with characteristic steps and rhythm, and consequently its own types of melody.

'Here is such a reference to the past from a Dasae song :

Where, O guru, were cows first born ?
Where, O chela, were men first brought into the world ?
In Hihiri, O guru, cows were first born
In Pipiri, O chela, men were first brought into the world.

'Finally it is also true that some *chikara*, a sense of the pathos of life, creeps into many of the songs. This is the pathos of a child, embodied in a Sohrae song :—

In the corner by the plantain tree, who is there ?
In the corner by the plantain tree, is the potter,
In the corner by the plantain tree, is the potter.
You in there, potter, you turn the wheel,
My mother and my father, none I have,
My mother and my father, make for me,
I will make them, my child, make them I will,
But the breath of life, I cannot give,
But the breath of life, I cannot give.

'Can we not hope that an army of students in Bengal will arise who are sympathetic and appreciative, and who will strive to save the poetry of the Santals from extinction, not only for the sake of science but also for the sake of the people themselves ?'

W. J. CULSHAW

THE MUNDA VIEW OF STARS

The interest taken in the stars by the Aryan Indians and the Mundas respectively is one of the points showing the deep divergency in the mentality of both races,' says Hoffmann. The Hindu gets a horoscope drawn up for every child that is born, because he believes that the stars influence and rule the life of every human being. The Munda neither knows nor cares to know what a horoscope is. Not that he is careless about it, or disbelieving in, supernatural influences on the life of man. He would not subscribe to the theory of Cassius :

Men at some time are masters of their fates,
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

The Munda is convinced that the great Spirit Singbonga is as anxious to give him the required indications with regard to the correct course of action as he himself is to receive them, but he seems unable to conceive how Singbonga could give him these directions through the far-away stars which appear never to stray a hair's breadth from their appointed course. Omens, to the Munda, are conveyed through the living beings which move about on the earth.

For this reason, perhaps, Munda folk-lore of the stars is scanty. Such as there is refers only to the more striking part of the sky which they have occasion to consider at leisure in the evening or just before dawn when, in harvest time (November-December), they guard their threshing floors. Only

a few stars, and these not always the brightest, have received names. The names of the stars have not been chosen to honour some deified ancestor, some hero or eminent personage, nor do they represent any mythical being. They are only projections, so to speak, on the starry sphere of certain features of the Munda's daily life. Looking up they have discovered in the grouping of certain stars a likeness to episodes of their own lives and have imagined the same episodes as occurring in the lives of the stars, which they regard as living beings. A charming little story illustrates this. A ploughman is at his work and his little son stands by looking on. As often happens, the plough disturbs a couple of mice, which the boy immediately catches and spits on a little stick of split bamboo, for roasted mice are a great delicacy. Meanwhile his father having spied a dove on her nest flings his wooden mallet at the bird. The clumsy projectile, aimed too high, only flushes the dove which alights at a little distance to wait until her enemy has disappeared. The ploughman is Rigel, the plough, the middle star in Orion's belt, the team of oxen the outer stars of the belt. The boy who has spitted the mice is the brightest star in Orion's dagger, and the mice the two faint stars in the dagger. The wooden mallet flung by the ploughman is the group known as the Pleiades, not unlike a round carver's mallet, and the flushed dove is Aldebaran, the brightest of the Hyades. An alternative story connected with this group of stars makes Singbonga whilst carving a yoke (Orion's Belt) for his oxen throw his mallet (the Pleiades) at the dove (Aldebaran).

Another pleasing story is told of the Square of Pegasus which the Mundas have named The Great Bed, or Singbonga's Bed, because none but Singbonga can be supposed to sleep on such a great and splendid couch. Mundas sleep generally on the ground but a kind of bed, never the length of a full-grown person and therefore not very comfortable to lie on, is found in many houses. It is often taken to the fields by those who watch the crops, because it is less exposed than the bare ground to the visits of venomous reptiles. The wide-meshed net-work of coarse string on which the sleeper lies curled up offers no protection against the cold from underneath. Sometimes, particularly in cases of illness, a small fire of glowing embers is kept under the bed to keep out the chilly night winds. When the rawness of a closing winter night drives people shivering from their sleep little groups of men and children can be seen sitting round small fires kindled from chaff, dry leaves and rubbish. To light these fires embers are usually brought from a neighbouring floor.

Imagine three men who want to light such a fire spying a watcher still asleep on his bed and underneath the smouldering remnants of a fire not yet dead. If they could get the embers from beneath the bed they would be able to light their own fire but in extracting them there is danger that they will not only extinguish the fire but waken the sleeper. It must be done stealthily. One, overcome with laughter at the thought of the sleeper's discomfiture on wakening to find that his fire has been stolen, is pushed aside by his companions, who are fearful of the probable results of his uncontrolled mirth.

All this the Mundas find represented in the sky. The bed is the Great Square formed by Alpheratz in Andromeda, and Scheat, Markab and Algenib in Pegasus. Within the Square there are a few small stars, including Upsilon and τ , just numerous enough to suggest a fire of flowing embers. The thieves are μ and Iota to the west of the bed and in a line pointing to the fire. The one pushed aside who cannot help laughing is Eta, slightly to the north-west of Scheat. (Hoffmann gives Delta of Cegnus for this latter star but this is far removed from the scene of the story. Eta of Pegasus approximates to the position of the laughing thief on the rough map Hoffmann gives on the last page of his volume of illustrations.)

Another use for the simple string bed described above, is that it serves as a bier to convey a corpse to the grave. After the burial one of the sides is broken and the bed is abandoned on the Munda's last resting place. When the watcher on a threshing floor is awakened by the cold shortly before dawn

on a winter's morning and gets up to rekindle his fire, if his gaze wanders towards the north it meets there the sight of the Great Bear and the quadrangle formed by Dubhe, Merak, Phecda and Megrez. Perhaps the cold predisposes him to sad thoughts, but he sees in the quadrangle the deformed frame of a bed, and Alioth and Mizar, the two nearest stars in the Tail, remind him of the mourners' burial ground after committing to the earth the remains of a An alternative story connected with this group is that the three stars of the tail of the Great Bear are thieves intent upon stealing the bed (the quadrangle) which they have pulled slightly out of shape in their efforts to carry it off. This version, however, may be a corruption of the story told in connection with the Great Square of Pegasus and the fire-thieves.

Canopus, the brilliant star low in the southern sky and second only to Sirius in brightness, is called by some the Hunter's star, because it is believed that deer graze only whilst this star is above the horizon. For lovers of the chase this was a matter of great interest in the far-off days when forests were denser and the abundant game they supplied was an important part of the daily food. It is possible that the absence of Canopus in the sky marked the close season for hunting (though this is a doubtful theory if the modern small boy with his bows and arrows and lethal catapult is any guide by which to form a judgment, game is game the year round to him) or simply that more pressing duties occupied the husbandman's time.

A familiar figure in every Munda village is the blacksmith who makes and sharpens the ploughshares and other agricultural tools in his primitive forge, and it would be strange if his counterpart were not found in the heavens. Capella, alpha of Auriga is called the Blacksmith. He sits watching the smithy fire represented by Epsilon, which is fed with the forced draught from the bellows, a pair of faint stars Eta and Zeta, slightly to the south.

Comets are called broom-stars from the likeness their spreading tails have to the brooms made from grass or bamboo which are found in every house.

In every village of any size there is a broad road called the Chaur by which the cattle are driven to and from their pasturage every day. The Milky Way appears to the Munda to be such a road, which he call simply Chaur or The Cow's Way—which in spite of the change of name appears to remain a Milky Way! There are other constellations than those of 'Heaven's high city. . . . Whose spangled suburbs entertain mine eye.' It is amusing to note that Hoffmann records an idiom which Mundas share in common (probably) with exasperated parents the world over when threatening their annoying and disobedient young, 'If I give thee a slap thou wilt see stars by daylight.' What brilliant new worlds may thus swim into the ken of the young sufferer! But such treatment can hardly dispose him to take up the science of Astronomy!

L. W. DAVEY

RATS

On 15 January 1946 I sat down on a Bondo *sindibor* (sacred stone platform) with a very charming and patient Warrant Officer of the R. A. F. and had my first meal of rat-flesh cooked with new beans and red ants. My airman friend shared this remarkable delicacy and enjoyed it, though I must confess I did not tell him what it was till it was all over. I must say—and I really am not trying to show off about this—that it was a very tasty dish (the hill rat, after all, like the hill man, is a clean creature), the red ants giving a clean, sharp, astringent flavour. In any case we had to have it, for we had gate-crashed (the third member of our party was H. V. Blackburn) into the Giag-gige Festival at Bodapada, and the eating of rats' meat is an important part of that great celebration. On the first day of the festival, before the vast licentious full-orbed moon of Pus rises above the eastern hills, the boys

of every Bondo village go into their hill-clearings and set traps for rats. Some of these traps are 'fall-traps,' stones propped up by sticks and baited in such a way that the least touch brings the weight down on the intruder ; others are long bamboo gloves, which are placed in a rat's run—when the unlucky creature enters it cannot get out : the boys then kill it by cutting it's throat with a knife or squeezing it to death through the bamboo slats. Sometimes Bondos breed rats, and you may see the sleek overfed creatures, but always with their teeth knocked out for a reason that will appear, in their cages in a Bondo home.

In the evening the youngsters come home, sometimes with twenty or thirty rats tied in a bundle in their loin-cloths. They sit by a fire and skewer the bodies onto a bit of telegraph wire (perhaps a wire cut by Congress workers during the 1942 rebellion) or a stick and roast them slowly in the flames. They are not to be eaten at once but are to be kept for presentation to the girls of the dormitory during a dance in another village. Some of the stouter rats, however, are taken by the older people and their flesh is boiled with beans, red ants and rice on the following day at the ceremonial eating of the New Beans, an important festival, before which no one may cut the *kereng* bark from which Bondo women make their cloth, or grass with which to thatch their houses.

There are a number of legends to account for this custom. One is from Datipada, two miles from Bodapada.

A Bondo Raja and a Raja of the rat tribe were great friends. But the rat fell in love with the Bondo Raja's wife and wondered how he might compass her body. There was a war and the Bondo Raja was called by the Nandpur Raja to go and fight. Before he went he planted a flowering shrub in the presence of his wife and his rat friend saying, 'If this withers it will mean that I am dead.' After the Raja had gone away, the rat dug a hole from its house to the garden and bit through the roots of the shrub and it died. Then the rat came to the Rani and said, 'Your husband is dead ; it will be no sin to lie with me.' In those days the rat had a long organ and the Bondo a small one. So he enjoyed her. But the Raja came home. He found the Rani and the rat sitting together and his shrub withered. He dug it up and saw the marks of the rat's teeth on the root. So he caught it and cut off its long organ and stuck it on his own body. Since then women have eaten rats with pleasure, for they feel they are taking revenge for the way they were once deceived.

Another story, from Gokurupada, attributes the enmity between man and the rat to the fact that it was the rat which nibbled a hole between the legs of the first Bondo woman and so created the vagina. The woman was very angry when she saw her blood flowing, and she killed the rat and ate its flesh with beans. This is said to be the reason why the Bondos knock out a rat's teeth if they are going to keep it as a pet, 'for who knows what would happen if it got to nibbling another hole?' Men are said to enjoy eating rats, for the flesh increases potency.

An entirely different motif was recorded at Goyigūda. Here the origin of rat-eating was connected with the discovery of fire.

Men had no fire ; they sought it in the hills. They found a clump of dry bamboos ; in one of them lived a rat. It said, 'If you'll get me out of this, I'll show you how to make fire.' The Bondos cut the bamboo and the rat came out and showed them how to rub one bamboo across another till fire came. Then as the Bondos were carrying their fire home, the rat said, 'I'll come with you' and it went to live with them in their village. After a little time there was a festival and the Bondos said to each other, 'What can we sacrifice?' The rat said, 'You've plenty of children, far too many of them. Sacrifice one of them and the gods and the dead will be pleased.' They thought his advice good and killed a fine boy. They cooked and ate the flesh and gave some of it to the rat,

But when it sat down to eat, it could hardly swallow the food for laughing. 'What are you laughing at?' asked the Bondos. 'Because you are such simpletons; I told you to kill your own child and you obeyed me' and it laughed again. This made the Bondos very angry and they killed it on the spot and swore that henceforth they would kill rats and offer them at their festivals.

In parts of Middle India, the crab is offered as a substitute for human sacrifice, and it is notorious that the Konds use a buffalo for this purpose. It is just possible, though I would not press the point, that the Bondos eat rats at the Giag-gige instead of a very ancient sacrifice of a human being.

V. E.

'RULER' OF NICOBAR RETIRES

THE only white man who can speak Nicobarese, the language of the aborigines of Nicobar Island, is in Delhi. He is Robert William Scott, a former Scottish International Soccer player and boxer, who has spent over 30 years out, including 14 as Deputy Commissioner of the Nicobar Island, and is retiring this week, at the age of 59. He proposes to settle down in Dehra Dun.

As virtual ruler of the Nicobar Island, cut off from the world except for mails received three or four times a year, he was brought close to the people and he entertained a warm affection for them. 'The so-called civilised nations have much to learn from these simple, primitive people. They are truthful and affectionate and have great admiration for those in authority who are not exploiters,' he said. Among their many virtues is a social code—the only one in the world—which classifies lying and loss of temper as a punishable offence.

As a physical culturist, Mr Scott trained the Nicobarese youth in football and other games. British sailors during their few visits to the island played football against the Nicobarese and found them worthy of their steel.

During the Viceroy's recent visit to the Andamans Mr Scott was invested with the M. B. E. by Lord Wavell.—A. P. I.

THE MAVACHIS

DURING a recent tour in the Dangs States, I one day met a number of young girls, fairer than the other aborigines of the area, covering the upper part of the body with only ten or twelve necklaces of white shell-like pebbles called *darshanya*. These necklaces added to their savage beauty. In the lower lobe of the ear the girls had circular ornaments called *bhowari*. They were members of the Mavachi tribe.

Unlike the other Dangs the Mavachis have retained the custom of buffalo sacrifice. They perform it at Dussera (the tenth day in the bright half of the moon of Ashvin) in front of the God Hanuman. They place the severed head of a he-buffalo on a tree near by and cut the flesh into small pieces and distribute it.

The Mavachi also engage in stork-worship. On the first day of the month of Kartik, they worship figures of the stork which they draw on their grain-bins and on the walls of their houses by the entrances.

The patron deity of the tribe is Pandar. He is represented by a white earthen clay dome, which resembles a miniature Buddhist stupa. Before they kindle the Holi fire, they erect a miniature pandal and cover it with *eugenia jambolana* leaves and worship Pandar there. In the month of Jyeshtha they dance before the god to ensure a good rainfall and a plentiful harvest.

The Gamit also worship Pandar and the stork, for they belong to the same stock though they claim a superior social status.

K. P. KANARPURKAR

'OLD DECCAN DAYS'

IN the Bibliography to my *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* I give the date of the second edition of Miss Frere's entrancing book *Old Deccan Days* as 1870. It was first published by John Murray in 1868. Some time later my friend, Mr R. E. Hawkins, wrote to me questioning the correctness of this and pointing out that in the 1929 reprint of the third edition Murray's own bibliography gives the date of the second edition as 1874. As I was on tour, far from reference books, I wrote to Sir John Murray to have the point settled. He replied: 'I have looked up the question that you raise. You have caught us out in error and, certainly, the bibliographical note giving the second edition as 1874 is incorrect. I find that:

'The first edition was in 1868, the second in 1870, the third in 1881, the fourth early in 1889 (though it may bear the date 1888), the fifth in 1898, the sixth in 1912, the seventh in 1929.

'As to translations; I am sorry that I cannot help you. As is often the case authors may arrange these themselves without telling us, so that I cannot claim that our records are in any way complete, and as all the Freres are dead now I cannot make further enquiries; and I have not got copies of the translations here.'

This should settle the point for future bibliographers, though strictly speaking I fancy that the 1888, 1898, 1912 and 1929 are simply reprints of the third, 1881, edition, which has become the standard text. I know of at least two American editions, at Philadelphia in 1868 and at Albany in 1897, but there must have been several others during the present century. Miss Frere herself wrote in the Preface to the 1881 edition that 'this book has been translated into the German, Hungarian, and portions of it into the Danish language, and has been retranslated, I am told, into Mahratti, Hindoostani and Guzerati'.

I will be grateful if any readers of *Man in India* can inform us of other editions and translations of this work, of which—so far as I know—a complete bibliography has yet to be made.

V. E.

THE WEEPING GOD

MR H. V. BLACKBURN, who has lived among the aboriginals of Middle India for many years, has given me the following strange and, I believe, entirely authentic story. 'In 1925, in the winter, I was returning from a bison hunt in the Bonai State. I was accompanied by the Ganju (headman) of Chardhara village, a Kol. We set out at 6 a.m. and were returning at midday and had had no connection with the village in the meantime. Suddenly as we were passing through dense jungle, the Ganju stopped and said, 'Two of my people have been killed by a tiger.' When I asked him how he knew, he replied, 'Sing-bonga (the Sun God) is weeping. I can see his tears on the path.' And he pointed to the rays of the sun falling on the ground before us. When we got to Chardhara, he made enquiries but found nothing had happened there, but he went on to another village in his jurisdiction some five miles away and found that two Kol women (unrelated to him) had been killed. They had been collecting leaves in the forest and a tiger sprang on one of them; the other went to rescue her friend and got killed also. Enquiries showed that the women had been killed about midday, at the very time when the Ganju had stopped and declared that he could see Sing-bonga weeping.'

V. E.

TOTEMISM

THE following letter, from the pen of Lord Raglan, appeared in *Man*, Vol XLV (1945), p. 136.

Sir, In his admirable account of the *Agaria* (p. 85), Dr Verrier Elwin puts forward a theory of totemism. After noting that it is a com-

mon practice to avoid scenes of ill-luck or death he goes on—'The Agaria stories suggest some such quite obvious and simple origin for totemism. Someone is bitten by a horse, and he and his children first avoid and then honour the horse, so that they will not be bitten again. Probably the many sections of the Bagh or Baghel sept are composed of the descendants of people who, long ago, were killed by tigers.'

If this were the true explanation, totemism should be universal, at least among savages, and all totems should be potentially injurious. Further, we should expect to find frequent changes of totem. If a man belonged to the tiger totem because his great-grandfather had been killed by a tiger, he might well switch over to the cobra totem, if his father were killed by a cobra.

Dr Elwin says that the totems are important to the Agaria because 'they keep him free from kin-and-clan-incest.' But why should the bite of a horse lead to an incest barrier?

RAGLAN

I propose to write more fully on this later, but in the meantime does anything occur to readers of *Man in India*?

V. E.

REVIEWS

A. AIYAPPAN. *The Iravas and Culture Change*. Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, New Series, General Section, Vol. V. No. 1, Government Press, 1944 (pp. 204 with XII plates.).

IN recent years several monographs have been published on tribes in transition, but little work has been done on castes in transition. Here, however, is a careful monograph of the Iravas. Mr Aiyappan who has benefited by the social changes within his own unprivileged caste, has made a thorough study of Irava social and economic organizations and he analyses the changes which the culture of his caste has undergone during the British period on contact with Brahmanism and western influences. He tries to estimate the profit and loss resulting from these changes. Chief among them is a weakening of caste barriers. Social classes are giving way to economic classes. It would appear that a Hindu caste in transition encounters fewer dangers and suffers less than a tribe in transition. The disparity between the cultural levels of lower and upper castes is less than between a tribe and the Hindu castes or Christianity and therefore the upheaval for the former is less dangerous and does not result in its destruction.

Several interesting points of Irava custom emerge during this study. In Central Kerala the Iravas practice fraternal polyandry and all the brothers of a family have a common wife. The custom seems to have been previously more widespread.

In divorce the husband takes thread from his cloth, burns it in the middle and blows away the two pieces.

Among the Iravas there is a class of idlers who set the caste sense of guilt at rest by making a profession of legitimizing illegitimate conceptions.

Mr Aiyappan deserves congratulations for a careful and useful study.

MILDRED ARCHER

G. M. MORAES, *Bibliography of Indological Studies 1942* (Examiner Press, Bombay, 1945).

THIS admirable and important work introduces a new element into Indian scholarship. Mr Moraes is that comparatively rare thing in India, a bibliographer by inclination, training and temperament, and for several years before the production of the volume before us, he had been working on a three volume *Bibliography of Indian History*; he now, I understand, intends to repeat his laborious and meritorious work on Indological studies every year. He will thus place scholars of every discipline in his debt, and on behalf of the anthropologists and folklorists I must express our gratitude for his rescue from oblivion of a number of articles buried in little-read journals and for drawing our attention to works in various Indian languages.

Mr Moraes' *Bibliography*, probably because it is the first of its kind, is not above criticism; it would have been a miracle had it been. In the first place, the book contains rather a mixed bag of articles and pictures which have little connection with the main theme of the work: one of them is by Mr H. D. Sankalia on the First Gujerat Prehistoric Expedition, another by Father Heras on 'The Seven Seas.' In future numbers of the *Bibliography* it would, I suggest, be better to confine attention to matters of strictly bibliographical interest.

The book is full of printer's errors and the proof-reading was done with a carelessness extraordinary in a work which in other respects gives such signal proof of exact scholarship. The actual type is in the main attractive, but certain improvements might be effected in a future issue. For example, a different fount should be used for roman figures which express the number of pages in an Introduction and for those giving the number of a volume; this is often, but not always, done. If the abbreviation p. or pp. is inserted before the page numbers, it is inconsistent not to insert Vol. before the number of a volume. I suggest that the style—author's name, title of book,

bracket, place of publication, comma, date, bracket, comma, volume and page—is more serviceable than that adopted in the text. Consistency in giving titles needs to be carefully watched. On p. 90, titles 1038-41 contain the following inconsistencies—

- | | |
|------|----------------------------------|
| 1038 | New Series VI on an . . . |
| 1039 | New Series No. VI on an . . . |
| 1040 | New Series, No. VII, On an . . . |
| 1041 | New Series No. VII, on the . . . |

Thus four different ways of writing the same expression are adopted in four successive titles.

During the war many journals and books were inaccessible to students in India and this probably accounts for certain omissions in Mr Moraes' lists—I am speaking, of course, only for his sections on Anthropology, Ethnology and Folklore. He does not seem to have had access to *Man*, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *The Journal of American Folklore* or *The American Anthropologist*. Other writers may find similar omissions, but we must not blame Moraes for them.

Mr Moraes tends to quote reviews from journals that can hardly be regarded as authoritative. Thus *The New Review* or *The Modern Review* are not technical anthropological journals and their reviews should not be quoted as the last word on books in the anthropology section.

A few minor errors may be noted. On p. 84, D. W. Mazumdar should be D. N. Majumdar; Fuchs should be Fuchs. On p. 85, Chattopadhyay should be Chattopadhyaya. On p. 86, Emmeneau should be Emeneau and Nemiari should be Nimari. G. Gausdal 'The Khut system of the Santals' should read J. Gausdal, 'The Khunt system.' On p. 89 Shriff should be Sheriff.

But these are comparatively small matters—though their amendment will improve future editions. Mr Moraes' work commands our unstinted admiration and gratitude; he has that limitless capacity for taking pains that has been described as the highest genius, and there is not one of us who will not be in this debt.

V. E.

K. J. SAVE, *The Warlis* (Padma Publications, Bombay, Rs. 10).

THE Warlis are a decayed community of semi-aboriginals living in the north-eastern part of Thana District and its neighbourhood. They number a little over two hundred thousand and appear to exhibit all the most distressing features of a primitive people which has been subjected to an unregulated process of acculturation.

Mr Save was for a number of years Special Officer for the protection of the aboriginals of Thana, and his book is much better than it looks. In appearance, it must be confessed, *The Warlis* is deplorable. Badly printed and not too well written, the proofs read carelessly, the line-drawings hardly intelligible, the half-tones a disgrace to the photographer and the block-maker, the book's format has little to commend it. Take, for example, the page of half-tones facing p. 94. The first, entitled 'Engrossed in dancing' and measuring 2½" by 1½", heavily over-exposed, shows four black ant-like forms against the walls of a dak bungalow. The second, 'Putting on bangles,' heavily under-exposed, is a confused mass of legs and shadows. The third, 'Date palm with toddy pots,' devotes half its exiguous space to a foreground of scrub on which the shadow of the photographer is clearly defined, above which rise two blurred trunks with a small dark patch which is presumably a pot. 1945 is a period of the world's technical photographic development when there is no excuse whatever for this sort of thing. It is a very great pity that Mr Save did not get his book published by a publisher who would have clothed his often admirable matter in a form appropriate to it.

For Mr Save is an anthropologist. He knows his stuff and he likes and respects his people. Although he uses that abominable word 'uplift' I suspect

that it is just a bad habit with him and comes largely from the company he keeps. He is not really one of the 'uplifters'; he is a man of intelligence and sympathy who only needs a little censoring and purging to do first-rate work.

The Warlis is packed with interesting things and I particularly liked the representations in which the author (without any blowing of trumpets about) has organized economics, mythology, religion and poetry into a single coherent synthesis. Mr Save's chapter on 'Ritual Songs and Mythology' is an important and original contribution to an aspect of anthropology to which *Man in India* has given special attention in recent years, and I wish he had sent it to us for independent publication before it appeared in his book. Mr Save, though I suspect he is over fond of reformers, is equally sound on administrative measures calculated to help the people. He will not accept the easy short-cut of prohibition: 'To have lasting effect, prohibition must come from within. For this toddy must be substituted by some other drink. Tea is a bad substitute, because it is not half as charming as toddy and doubly expensive. Mere sermons on prohibition will fall only on deaf ears.' Wise words, and I trust that the politicians and administrators who have commended Mr Save's work on the jacket will heed them. Mr Save also puts education in its place. 'In the case of the aborigines like the Warlis, prior to education, the problem of bread must be solved. . . In the case of people who hardly get bread twice a day literacy is a tall talk. A hungry man refuses to digest anything but food.' Excellent—and Mr Save reinforces his argument by a great deal of detailed statistical material about the economic condition of his tribe.

If this book could be re-written, re-printed, re-illustrated and re-published, it would be a not unimportant contribution to Indian anthropology.

V. E.

R. C. S. BELL, *Orissa District Gazetteers : Koraput* (Orissa Government Press, Cuttack).

THIS book is advertised on its front page as costing the extraordinary sum of nine rupees, thirteen annas, six pies or, '145.9d' (sic)—a piece of fantastic carelessness all too typical of a certain type of printing press and unfortunately characteristic of the book. Which is a pity, for Mr Bell deserves better than this, and his *Gazetteer*, over which he has evidently taken great pains, has been given to the world in a condition even more distressing than that of *The Warlis*. Here again it is in the half-tones that the publishers have shown their knowledge of block-making and their appreciation of photographic art. The superb gorge of Dudma below the . . . into a narrow coffin 3" by 2", in the middle of a large page, 10" by 6½"; someone has apparently been giving his finger prints on the picture and the result . . . cannot even be imagined. Still more remarkable is the representation of the ruins of an ancient Jaina temple on the Sembiliguda-Nandapur Road; from a black maelstrom may dimly be perceived a lot of grass, some unattractive trees and something like a box of K Rations almost out of sight. But it is not till we reach page 178 that Mr Bell (?) and his publishers really spread themselves. In their two full-page pictures of the Jeypore Sugar Factory, Rayaghada—one a 'main view' and the other of the 'staff quarters'—they reveal their artistic appreciation of the beauty of Koraput District, an area which for sheer loveliness must be unparalleled in India. Not for them the sounding cataract or mountain hoar, not for them even pictures of those 'attractive little creatures' the Poroja girls, to whom Mr Bell so lyrically refers; their idea of beauty is modern, functional, austere: you see it perfectly expressed in the main view of the Jeypore Sugar Factory at Rayaghada.

When we turn from the production to the matter of the *Gazetteer*, however, there is a different story to tell. Mr Bell has based his book substantially on the *Vizagapatam District Gazetteer* by W. Francis, which was publish-

ed in 1907 when Koraput was part of Vizagapatam and of the Madras Presidency. The constitution of Orissa as a Province in 1936 and of Koraput as a District in 1936 made a new Gazetteer desirable. Another work on which Mr Bell has drawn is D. F. Carmichael's *Manual of the Vizagapatam District* (1869), from which much interesting information about the Meriah sacrifices has been taken and presented in a readily accessible form. The new Koraput Gazetteer follows the usual lines and throughout is concise, informative and, so far as I can tell, accurate. There is an admirable chapter on 'The People' of Koraput, which contains much material of interest to anthropologists, even though one may not agree with all Mr Bell's judgments. For example, he says that 'while the Poroja is cheerful, friendly and amenable, the Gadaba is sullen, shy and obstinate'; I do not know whether to follow that. And he accepts Eickstedt's quite ludicrous comparison of the Konds as 'cheerful, mobile, friendly and self-possessed' with the Saoras as 'reserved, suspicious, refractory and obstinate.' I do not know the method of classifying these people, but in any case I would have been inclined, if at all, to reverse these judgments.

It is a great pity that Mr Bell's book does not seem to be available to the general public, but if any anthropologist can get hold of a copy I warmly commend it to him.

V. E.

MAN IN INDIA

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COMMENT

AN ADMINISTRATION NUMBER

ONE of the functions of *Man in India*, a function that was fully recognized by its founder, Sarat Chandra Roy, has been to relay the findings of anthropological science in other countries to its readers in India. Many such readers, particularly those stationed in places distant from the great libraries, do not have access to the learned journals of the west, still fewer are in the happy position of receiving regular copies of their own. For such readers, therefore, the reprinting of material, even though not original to *Man in India*, is a real boon. During the war the useful section 'Notes on Foreign Periodicals' had to be abandoned, since few foreign periodicals found their way to India. But we hope now to restart this feature and count ourselves fortunate indeed in having secured the assistance of Dr C. von Fürer-Haimendorf to direct it.

In the present issue we reprint some notable pronouncements on the future of the aboriginal tribes of India. The first is from the pen of Mr W. V. Grigson, C.S.I., I.C.S., author of *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* and of a comprehensive survey of the problems of the tribal populations of the Central Provinces. His paper was originally printed by the Royal Anthropological Institute. The second article is Professor J. H. Hutton's Presidential Address for 1945 to the same Institute and is about a subject on which he has remained an unrivalled authority since the publication in 1921 of his volumes on the Angami and Sema Nagas. Additional copies of these two papers can be obtained from the Royal Anthropological Institute (21 Bedford Square, London, W. C. 1) for half a crown apiece.

The third article on a similar topic is by Mr F. Kingdon-Ward, F.L.S., F.R.G.S., author of *Assam*

Adventure, and is reproduced from *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (Nos. 45-7, November 1945). This journal has done much to educate Indian public opinion on questions affecting the primitive tribes and we are glad to pay our tribute to the enthusiasm and affection of its editor Mr S. Jepson for everything to do with tribal India.

The fourth article, by the late Sarat Chandra Roy, originally appeared ten years ago in *The Indian Nation* (Patna, 1936), and we reproduce it for its historical interest as well as for the fundamental principles it embodies.

To *The Illustrated Weekly*, *The Indian Nation* and the Royal Anthropological Institute we offer the fullest acknowledgements and thanks.

We believe that readers of *Man in India*, especially those in administrative positions, will welcome the anthologizing, as it were, of these important documents within a single cover. Much of what is printed here has aroused controversy; the Editors of *Man in India* are by no means in agreement with all the views expressed. But that is not the point. There is no greater problem for the tribes to-day than that of acculturation; it is a problem that can only be solved as these writers have attempted it—patiently, humbly, scientifically.

W. G. A.

THE ABORIGINAL IN THE FUTURE INDIA

BY W. V. GRIGSON

THIS paper deals primarily with the aboriginals of the highlands and plains of Central and Southern India, and not with the hill-tribes of Assam, about which Professor Hutton spoke in the Presidential Address to the Royal Anthropological Institute which he delivered in June, 1945. I wish first to examine the safeguards provided for the aboriginals in British India under the constitution of 1935; there are no *legal* safeguards for the aboriginals of any Indian State.¹

The Government of India Act provided for the partial exclusion from its operation of certain backward areas principally inhabited by primitive tribes. These areas had, under the 1919 constitution and before, been subject to practically the same administrative, judicial and legislative machinery as the rest of India. The partial exclusion provisions could, therefore, easily be misinterpreted as detracting from the full provincial autonomy which the Act purported to effect, and in the political temper then prevalent in India, they were inevitably bitterly criticized as betraying distrust of the Indian's capacity to administer, to treat minorities fairly, and to do as much as his British predecessors to protect the aboriginal.

The relevant schedule of the constitutional Bill as originally drafted listed few areas for partial exclusion. A back-bench revolt, unexpected by the Government Whips, led to a wide extension of the list. The revolt sprang from the deep-seated apprehension of a private member who in shooting expeditions to the central highlands had learnt to love the aboriginals and resent their exploitation by their neighbours. Faced by it, the Government referred the schedule back to India, to be revised and extended in the light of the parliamentary debate, and after obtaining the views of district officers. But the whole enquiry had to be rushed, to avoid further delay in the already protracted passage of the Bill, and the views of anthropologists were not obtained.

The hurriedly revised schedule that resulted was naturally not altogether happy. Although Mr Mills of the Assam cadre of the I.C.S., an administrator with an anthropological bias, was placed on special duty to examine the recommendations of districts and provinces, he had no personal knowledge of tribal areas outside Assam, and the time-limit made it impossible for him to tour. He had, therefore, to judge each recommendation by the criteria of the numbers of the tribes in each area, and of their relative backwardness as reported by officials and governments; and he was under the practical necessity of scheduling only compact areas of reasonable size, with boundaries clearly definable in a legal enactment. The resultant Government of India despatch, with the district and provincial recommendations, was presented to Parliament in January, 1936, and the schedule recommended in the

¹ I must emphasize that the views expressed in this paper are personal, since I am still a serving member of the Indian Civil Service.

despatch became law. In the Central Provinces and Berar only 833,000 out of the 2,990,000 aboriginals lived in the areas selected for partial exclusion, a somewhat inadequate translation into effect of Parliament's intentions.

The storm of criticism that burst in India failed to consider the legal results of partial exclusion. Under the Constitution, the executive authority of a Province extends to partially excluded areas in it, and they are to be administered by Ministers in the same way as the rest of the province, subject only to two special responsibilities imposed on the Governor, for (a) safeguarding the legitimate interests of minorities, and (b) the peace and good government of those areas. It is laid down that a Governor, when his special responsibilities are concerned, shall exercise 'his individual judgment'; and this is further defined in his Instrument of Instructions as meaning that he should normally be 'guided by the advice of his Ministers, unless in his opinion so to be guided would be inconsistent with the fulfilment' of his special responsibilities or 'with the proper discharge of any function which he is otherwise by or under the Act required to exercise in his individual judgment.' The Instrument further directs him 'to be studious so to exercise his powers as not to enable his Ministers to rely upon his special responsibilities in order to relieve themselves of responsibilities which are properly their own.' It is clear that ministerial executive authority over the partially excluded areas was thus complete, unless any step taken should adversely affect 'legitimate' rights of minorities, or tend to disturb peace and good government: the initiative rested with the Ministers.

The chief constitutional difference between partially excluded areas and the rest of a province lies in the legislative field, in which there are two special provisions. First, even though a Bill of the Central or Provincial Legislature becomes law, it has no effect in a partially excluded area unless the Governor by notification so directs, and in so directing he may order that the Act concerned shall apply to the area subject to such exceptions or modifications as he thinks fit. Secondly, the Governor is empowered to make Regulations for the peace and good government of any partially excluded area. Clearly the Governor would normally use these special powers on his Ministers' advice. The powers are valuable indeed to Ministers, for by their use they can avoid having to draft the cumbersome additions that would be necessary in every Bill to meet the special difficulties of the backward areas, for which a provision needed in advanced areas may be quite unsuited.

For instance, a major item in the Congress Ministry's legislative programme for the Central Provinces was their 1939 Tenancy Bill, which, in order to improve rural credit in the province generally, sought to remove legal checks on the transfer of tenancy holdings. The debates on the Bill recognised that this freedom of transfer would be fatal for aboriginal tenants who were already

steadily losing their lands to creditors and others; but to avoid delay in passing the Bill, the Ministry decided to leave the special case of the aborigines to be covered by modifications or exceptions in the subsequent notification applying the Act to the partially excluded areas. It was, of course, peculiarly unfortunate in this case that those areas contained less than a third of the aborigines of the province, the areas where they are most rapidly being dispossessed not being partially excluded. That points to an important necessity in every province, an amendment of the provincial General Clauses Act to empower Ministers to exercise in any other notified backward areas powers in respect of the application of new laws similar to those exercisable by Governors in the partially excluded areas.

The value of the Governor's power of making Regulations for the peace and good government of partially excluded areas may be seen from the Madras Regulation of 1940 to abolish debt bondage and to control unskilled labour agreements in the partially excluded areas.

Typical of the bitter criticism of these constitutional provisions, and perhaps first off the mark, were the majority of the Indian Legislative Assembly in February, 1936. They condemned exclusion after a debate in which, as Verrier Elwin says, 'otherwise intelligent persons declared that the excluded areas were a trick of the anthropologists to preserve the aborigines as museum specimens for the exercise of "their blessed science"'. In the same year, the Indian National Congress, meeting at Faizpur, denounced exclusion as 'yet another attempt to divide the people of India into different groups, with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment, to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country,' and as 'intended to leave out the larger control, disposition and exploitation of the mineral and forest wealth in those areas, and keep their inhabitants apart from India for their easier exploitation and suppression'. At Hari-pura, in 1938, the Congress virtually repeated this resolution, and there were debates on exclusion in most provincial legislatures. The Bombay 1938 debate was typical: speakers again accused anthropologists of promoting exclusion so as to use the areas concerned as museums in which to study the aborigines as exhibits, and indignantly denied that aborigines needed protection against other Indians, who were their own kith and kin.¹

Elwin suggested that because of this attitude, the actual result of partial exclusion had probably been to destroy any real chance of protection. He considered that partial exclusion gave very little help to the aboriginal, who lived under the ordinary system of government, exposed to every form of political and social propaganda, and with all local facilities controlled by district councils composed mainly of the very people who had risen in the

¹ *Loss of Nerve*, (Bombay, 1941), p. 8.

world by exploiting him. 'He has the vote, but little idea of how to use it. At the last elections some of the aboriginals went to the polls believing it was something to do with the land revenue ; some went to worship Mahatma Gandhi ; others abstained because they were not ordered to go by the local officials' ¹.

I disagree with this verdict upon the exclusion policy, however, because of its inherent constitutional value, already described ; because of the enquiries to which it has given rise ; because through them it is producing the first tentative approach to a defined permanent policy ; and because it has stimulated Indian public opinion to realise the existence of the aboriginal problem. It was, of course, a hurried improvization, and was not supported by propaganda ; it left outside the partially excluded areas masses of those aboriginals most exposed to exploitation and culture-contact, who consequently remain unprotected save for the paternalism of local officers, their own so far undeveloped use of the vote, and the Governor's special responsibility for safeguarding their legitimate interests as a minority. Some Indian publicists have since denied them the status of a minority, a denial abetted by most British utterances about the future of India, which say much about Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Untouchables, but nothing about aboriginals.

Partial exclusion is producing, above all, a groping towards a definite policy, lacking in the past. There was force in the argument advanced during the Haripura Congress debate on exclusion by Babu Rajendra Prasad. He said that while nobody objected to safeguarding the aboriginals' rights and all would be glad to see everything done to raise them educationally, socially and economically, they were not persuaded that the provisions contained in the constitution would really improve their position or better their lives. The constitutional provisions will not, indeed, do so, unless they make governments and politicians realise present conditions and formulate a programme for improving them.

The criticism recently applied by Mr Leonard Barnes to indirect rule in Africa, to the effect that aimlessness seems to be the main characteristic of the scheme of indirect rule and even of the conception of trusteeship,² has always been applicable to the administration of most of the aboriginal areas of India. Some provinces did more for them than others. The Central Provinces Government did much between 1861 and 1935 to enforce law and order, to secure tribal title in land and to save the tribes from the tyranny of the liquor-seller and the worst exploiters ; generally speaking, it administered the tribal areas with benevolent and paternal autocracy. Yet it 'did almost nothing to investigate their living conditions or their psychology, and it passed no laws in their interests except the feeble Land Alienation Act of 1916,

1. op. cit., p. 8.

2. *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, Penguin Special, 1944, p. 40.

a chapter of the Land Revenue Act of 1917 protecting headmen and village lessees, a few provisions of tenancy law, and a section of the Berar Land Revenue Code restricting alienation of some aboriginals' land. No special provisions were made for local government institutions in tribal areas. Excise laws were drafted under the influence of the Hindu and Muslim repugnance for alcohol that is so alien to aboriginal ideas, and led to thousands of aboriginals being jailed or fined beyond their means for offences against excise rules quite beyond their comprehension. Almost no social services were provided in tribal areas, not deliberately, but because the Government allowed itself to be defeated by difficulties of language, climate, isolation and the reluctance of town-bred youths to serve in these (to them) uncongenial and alien backwoods and mountains.

Many Indians, avid for the sweeping away by 'democracy' of divisions of race and nationality, so as to generate 'the utmost dynamic force in society as an aggregate of men'¹ and widen as much as possible 'the symbiotic circle of the individual,'² are keenly interested in the results of, and the ideas underlying, the Russian treatment of the tribes of Central Asia. The basic principle of this treatment is that all uncivilized peoples are the reserves which democracy should mobilize by striving to bring them to the same level of culture and civilization as the most advanced Russians. Such Indians see that their 25 million aboriginals are, democratically speaking, the most defective and ineffective of their backward fellow-Indians and therefore a brake on the attainment of democracy; they therefore feel that they can no longer tolerate a static, aimless or overcautious aboriginal policy.

The expedient of partial exclusion and special responsibilities for the first time led to official attempts to define the aims of aboriginal policy. The Secretary of State and provincial Governors felt that if they were effectively to discharge these special responsibilities, special enquiries must be made into aboriginal conditions. From a different angle, Ministers realised that they too must know more of the aboriginals if they were to avoid the interference of the Governor in discharge of his special responsibilities; they were also responsive to the awakening, by the exclusion controversy, of public opinion to the aboriginal problem. The Secretary of State informed Governors that Parliament was uneasy as to the method of securing the knowledge on which the proper discharge of these responsibilities would depend, and suggested the appointment of selected officers as advisers for the partially excluded areas, to keep Governors and Ministers informed of their needs. The Instrument of Instructions³ also enjoined this, and extended the field of the proposed adviser to the primitive

1. Panikar, *Caste and Democracy*, 1933, p. 28.

2. loc. cit., p. 29.

3. In Instruction XV.

tribes outside the partially excluded areas.

Action followed, everywhere. In Orissa the Congress Ministry appointed a Partially Excluded Areas Committee. Though this body urged the abolition of partial exclusion, it did recommend the formation of a welfare department for the primitive tribes under a selected officer and three assistants, aided by an Advisory Board and annual grants, supplemented by a yearly central grant of Rs. 5 lakhs for ten years. Bihar, in 1939, appointed a special officer for Chhota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, with an Advisory Board; it is interesting that this occurred under pressure from the aboriginal members of the provincial legislature. Just before their resignation late in 1939, the Central Provinces and Berar Ministry were considering forming a department for the 'uplift' of both untouchables and aboriginals (not a sound combination, the psychological background of the two categories being so different). Then all the Congress Ministers in India resigned. But the Governors went ahead: reports were published, after enquiry, by selected officers in Bombay and the Central Provinces and Berar, and for the smaller partially excluded areas of Bengal and the United Provinces. Madras extended the scope of its Labour Commissioner's work to tribal welfare, and now publishes an annual report on aboriginal tribes and backward communities. Bengal has appointed one of the Members of the Board of Revenue as tribal adviser. In Assam, Mr J. P. Mills has been appointed Adviser for the tribal areas. But it is unfortunate not only that the suspension of the constitution in so many provinces has dissociated political parties from the drawing up and execution of policy in the light of the various reports, but also that war pre-occupations and the natural hesitation of caretaker governments to embark on important new policies have meant little positive action on the reports of the special officers and advisers.

Meanwhile, however, the results of the provincial enquiries and of the stimulation of public interest have extended to the Indian States. Travancore has appointed a Protector of Backward Classes and placed her tribes under the special tutelage of the Forest Department. Mysore has embarked on a special policy. The Political Department has stimulated attention to the protection and betterment of aboriginals throughout the Eastern States, and has begun active measures for helping the Bhils and other tribes in the Dangs estates of the Gujarat Political Agency. Lord Wavell has commended generally to Indian States the recommendations of some of the provincial reports; indeed Indore and other States seem more likely to implement those recommendations in the near future than the provinces from which they emanated. Since 1940 Hyderabad has set an example to India by associating an anthropologist, Baron Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, with the problem. He is not only publishing under the auspices of the

Nizam's Government a series of studies of the tribes of the Deccan, but has also furnished that Government with administrative reports on the conditions of the local aboriginals. Aided by his wife he has set going at Marlavai in the Gond country, with Government grants, a centre for training Gond teachers and social workers for a rapidly expanding network of aboriginal schools. Fürer-Haimendorf is likely soon to be formally appointed Tribal Adviser to the Hyderabad Government and inaugural Professor of Anthropology in the Osmania University. Finally, the Bonai, Keonjhar and Pal Lahara States of Orissa, at the Resident's suggestion, in 1942 employed Verrier Elwin as anthropologist to advise on tribal *jhuming*, on the preservation of the valuable elements of tribal culture, and on the development of social services in tribal areas. He has recently been appointed Honorary Ethnographer by the Government of Orissa.

These developments lead us to ask what has been and is being done for Anthropology in India. Applied anthropology is only now beginning to be brought to bear on Indian problems. Even in anthropological research immense leeway has to be made up. For long nothing had been done except the issue under the auspices of the old Government of India Ethnographic Survey of the well-known provincial volumes on Tribes and Castes. The late Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy rightly described them as mere general and superficial surveys, descriptive catalogues or ethnographic glossaries which might provide some basis for the more intensive studies essential as materials for science. Roy was among Indians the pioneer anthropologist, not only with his published studies of Chhota Nagpur tribes, but also by virtue of a lifetime of devoted service to those tribes and by founding and editing till his death the journal *Man in India*. My own book, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, published in 1938, was the first detailed study, I believe, of any section of the Gonds or of any central Indian tribe. Since then we have had Verrier Elwin's studies of the Baigas and the Agarias, his *Maria Murder and Suicide*, and his collections of tribal songs and folklore, shortly to be followed by a book on the Murias and their youth dormitories; as co-editor he, R. C. Roy and W. G. Archer, I.C.S., the author of a book on Uraon folk-song, continue the publication of *Man in India*, despite financial difficulties. Fürer-Haimendorf has published studies of the Chenchus and the Hill Reddis, and will soon have completed two volumes on the Hyderabad Gonds; these, and Rivers' well-known book on the Todas, are, I believe, the only detailed studies of southern Indian tribes. The Tribes and Castes volumes for the Mysore, Travancore and Cochin States, which have appeared long after the old provincial compilations and are the work of Indian scholars, are of a far higher standard than the provincial series. In recent years, at last, Indian anthropologists have been studying the Kols, Gonds, Pardhans, Khatris, Bhoj and other

tribes, though unfortunately, being tied to teaching in universities, they have often relief too much on 'tip-and-run' visits and have published without sustained field-work.

The teaching of anthropology in Indian universities is progressing and beginning to weaken political prejudice against anthropology, even if one or two recent works have played to the political gallery. Standards should be higher, and the stimulus of more foreign anthropologists working in India is needed. There are now anthropological schools in Calcutta, Patna, Benares, Lucknow, Madras, Bombay and Mysore Universities, and Osmania hopes soon to inaugurate one. Anthropological teaching is conspicuously lacking at Nagpur, the university of the ethnologically so important Central Provinces. Little encouragement, perhaps for lack both of funds and of appreciation of the value of anthropology, has been given by Indian universities to research divorced from teaching.

The contribution of Indian learned societies to anthropology is still small. Neither in the section of his 1944 report to the Indian Government on scientific research in India, nor elsewhere in the report, did Professor A. V. Hill, Secretary of the Royal Society, mention anthropology. But the Indian Science Congress has a section for Anthropology and Archæology, and the recent annual presidential addresses, the papers read, and the resolutions passed have shown a growing appreciation of anthropology in Indian nation-building. There has been similar encouragement from the Indian National Institute of Sciences. That pioneer of learned societies in India, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, has maintained its interest in anthropology, and has joined with the National Institute of Sciences and some British anthropologists in pressing the claims of anthropology on funds available in India after the war for scientific research. It is good news that as a result the Government of India has included in its post-war plans the creation of an Anthropological Survey: this should be given a high priority, for tribal cultures are changing very fast. Mention should also be made of the Bombay Anthropological Society and the Bihar and Orissa Research Society. But the body that should be the Indian equivalent of the Royal Anthropological Institute, namely the Indian Anthropological Institute, has still to get into its stride, and emerge from the various difficulties that have bogged it since its inauguration a few years ago. Its distinguished secretary, Dr B. S. Guha, is now working hard to overcome these, and to raise funds to set the Institute on a sound financial basis. It has still to plan its work: Dr Guha sees as its first task consideration of the aboriginal problem, and vigorous execution of a plan of research. The enormous distances of India always militate against the success of such a society if it works only on an all-India basis, with one meeting a year, since for effective work frequent meetings of active branches in States and Provinces seem necessary. I

hope that the Indian Institute will not look in vain to the Royal Anthropological Institute for help and encouragement. Incidentally, the last available printed list of Fellows of the Royal Institute shows us to be very short of Fellows of Indian race, domicile or connections; they numbered only 34, compared with 89 with African experience.¹

Knowing what the application of anthropology to the problems of African and other dependencies has meant, we can be certain that further attempts to rehabilitate or better the lot of the Indian aboriginal cannot succeed (to use the words of Lord Hailey about the colonial empire in our Centenary Meeting) without a far more intensive study of tribal institutions through the special technique of the anthropologist. It is therefore good to see the growing value and official and political appreciation of Indian anthropological opinion.

As a result of the various provincial and State reports, of the numerous recently published anthropological studies of tribes, of the stimulation of public opinion by the exclusion controversy and by the emergence, unfortunately only in Bihar, of aboriginal political leaders who have combined with missionaries and others into aboriginal preservation societies as pressure-groups of growing significance, the governments, politicians, voters and officials in India now have before them a mass of data, and can slowly evolve a more purposeful type of administration for the backward peoples. There is also, I believe, some idea of supplementing provincial efforts by the creation of an all-India tribal welfare bureau or adviser, a welcome step. But this will still be far from adequate: administrators will still have before them no general directive, no declared aims. Moreover once again India's constitution is in the melting-pot, and Indians are to mould their own future constitutions. The days of Britain as the protecting power are doomed: Indians themselves must do the protecting, and regard it as a debt of honour to end the aboriginal problem by pursuing a defined policy. But what mention has there been of the aboriginals in recent constitutional discussions? There is a real danger of the repeal in the new constitution of the safeguards devised for the aboriginals in the 1935 constitution, and of the whole question sinking back into the obscurity of *laissez faire*. In most of India aboriginal pressure-groups are still unthinkable, for there has been no political education of the aboriginal. Political democracy, working through legislatures and local bodies created by direct election, is almost meaningless to him; hardly anyone has dreamt of 'economic democracy' and training for a democratic way of life, or instance through aboriginal co-operatives.

Our immediate objectives should therefore, I think, be threefold: (a) to keep Indian thought increasingly aware of the aboriginal problem as its own 'colonial' problem and 'on its honour' to

1. Of these, Fellows still in India and Africa were 20 and 77 respectively.

solve it ; (b) to take stock of the economic, cultural, political, administrative and anthropological material and gauge what further enquiry is needed ; and (c) to attempt to define for the new governments in India the aims to be pursued in their treatment of the tribes.

I believe that for the attainment of these objectives the step that should be taken now is the appointment of an Indian Royal Commission. I stress the word Indian, because it is essential that it should not start on its work hampered by the prejudice that might be aroused by a Commission appointed by the Home Government. There are various precedents for Royal Commissions appointed by Dominions Governments. Such a Commission set up by His Majesty on the advice of his Indian Government might have distinct political advantages. Most of the members should be Indians, and the Chairman an Indian, preferably an administrator, not necessarily from British India. Politicians, anthropologists, and civil servants, including members of the technical services, should be drawn upon. The anthropologists should include two or three British or foreign anthropologists, and they should tap non-Indian experience not only of India's tribes, but also of similar tribes elsewhere and of attempted solutions of their problems.

Officials and politicians sometimes criticize special measures for aborigines, saying that it is unfair and inadequate to single out the primitive tribes for special treatment, when there are other backward communities. There are various answers to this. First, the primitive tribes are the most backward and worst exploited communities in India, and the least adapted to the impact of modern conditions. Secondly, they have their own distinct culture, languages, social organization and traditions, which does not apply to the Untouchables and other backward castes and regions. Thirdly, all other communities are politically far less backward than these tribes, the Untouchables in particular having strong political representation in the legislatures and a growing sense of their political power. Fourthly, for no other section of the population has so little been achieved by governments, or by social and political workers. Lastly, even in the partially excluded areas there are Untouchables and backward Hindu peasant classes living among or near the tribal majority, while in the other areas the aborigines are always in close symbiosis with non-aborigines ; therefore it will be impossible to confine the working of betterment measures to the aborigines or to the partially excluded areas. There is a vast work to be done for the betterment of all Indian villagers : measures that succeed for the tribes will have proved their practicability and are likely to work even more rapidly when extended to their neighbours.

One would like to include among the Commission's terms of reference specific examination of Russian policy and achievement

among the backward races of European and Asiatic Russia. We need an independent, scientific and dispassionate verdict on the results and their applicability to tribal India, indeed to all rural India. Those who criticize British colonial methods almost always take, at their face value, and as a stick with which to beat our own methods, the laudatory accounts trumpeted abroad by Russians themselves. When will foreign anthropologists be free themselves to do untrammelled field-work throughout the U.S.S.R.?

It would be remiss to end this paper without attempting a personal view of some of the aims that should form part of the new policy needed for the primitive tribes in India. The chapter headings of Elwin's essay, *Loss of Nerve*, give a summary of the causes for that loss of nerve among the aborigines, with which there is little to disagree, save, perhaps, in emphasis. Those headings are : loss of land ; loss of forest freedom and of the ritual hunt ; the suppression of the home distillery ; nervous and moral exhaustion from conflict with the law ; an unregulated system of education ; general economic impoverishment ; collapse of tribal industries ; frustration of the creative impulse ; and the effect of external contacts on tribal religion.

As to 'forest freedom,' while agreeing that the controls imposed by the need to safeguard these national assets have had an adverse effect on aboriginal contentment, I cannot feel that this effect was inevitable. Things would have been different had the aboriginal himself been encouraged to understand the reasons for conservancy, to take pride in the maintenance of the forests, and to share on a co-operative basis in their exploitation. *Loss of Nerve* did not, I think, sufficiently emphasize the almost complete absence from the aboriginal mind of that intelligent participation in affairs and controls without which there can be no political or economic democracy. Above all, there must be an approach to some elements of 'economic democracy' if the aboriginal is to play his due part in the India of the future. The Russians consider that political democracy is only attainable as a function or consequence of economic democracy, defined by Engels as 'the organization of production on the basis of free and equal association of the producers' ; and the imaginary Russian critic who tours Africa in *Soviet Light on the Colonies* comments¹ that this control of production by the workers involves as a prerequisite the social ownership of productive property and as a consequence their control of all the daily conditions of life. Once the workers acquire economic democracy, he adds, it is prized by them as highly as life itself, or indeed more highly, since it enables them to modify and develop life in ways which they think desirable.

Of the possible truth of this theory in regard to Indian aborigines, we have some indication in a comparison of systems of exploitation of forests by the Forest Department. There is a

1. p. 250.

great contrast in aboriginal happiness and prosperity between the areas where the department auctions coupes to contractors, practically none of whom are aboriginals, and those where aboriginal axe-men and cart-men have direct dealings with the Department. Honesty among forest contractors is the exception rather than the rule; but immediately a forest block is opened to direct departmental working *without* contractors, the tribesmen flock to it, villages rapidly expand, and all conditions and standards of living improve. Another striking example comes from the forest areas peopled by Hill Reddis and Koyas in the south-east corner of Hyderabad, close to the great Godavari gorge. There, thanks largely to inadequate administrative supervision and a venal set of forest subordinates, rapacious Madrasi contractors had bound the aboriginal forest labourers in appalling thralldom and, working in a close ring, were securing valuable forest coupes at nominal bids in rigged auctions. They were actually selling to each other the exclusive right to the labour of individual villages, and enforcing the right whenever a labourer rebelled or tried to work for another contractor by terrorism, which did not stop short at murder.

These conditions were exposed by Fürer-Haimendorf. Since then a striking change has occurred. Many contractors were black-listed by the Government. A Hindu Swami, who had settled in the area to help the tribes, organized them into an informal forest co-operative which has successfully operated many forest contracts on bids infinitely higher than those paid by any Madrasi contractor, to the gain of Government and tribesmen alike. In such areas forest co-operatives may do more than agricultural co-operatives or collective farms by teaching tribesmen to handle all branches of trade in forest produce, whence it would be a logical step for them to learn to control forest growth, and forestry in all its aspects. These co-operatives, moreover, could combine with the extraction and sale of forest produce the purchase and distribution of all the consumer goods needed by the tribesmen, who are fleeced by the bazaar merchants and hawkers who now supply them.

Take again the poor, decadent cultivation of the tribal peasantry. Ignorant though they are of modern agriculture, and seldom reached by Government agricultural propagandists, yet the main causes of the present conditions are loss of land, combined with growth of population. The steady and heavy loss of land of which the aboriginal is everywhere a victim, save where transfer is effectively prohibited, has been accompanied by a heavy increase of population and the consequent impoverishment of poor mountain soils through decrease in the size of holdings. As a result it has been impossible to let a third of the soil remain fallow once in three years, according to the rotation system which formerly kept it productive, for instance, among the Gonds. Before forest reserves were demarcated the Gonds were also free, if a clearing was ex-

hausted, to break up fresh land from waste ; there was then, moreover, little restriction on *bewar* (*jhum*) cultivation, which is now usually prohibited, or confined to such small areas that the frequent burnings necessitated cannot leave time for the forest growth sufficiently to recover between one burning and the next.

This curtailment of opportunity came with a gradual shift from transactions in kind to a cash economy. The change is still incomplete in Gondwana, even if it has gone further than in the Assam Hills.¹ The tribesman must now find cash to pay rents and fines for breaches of forest, excise and other laws and to bribe petty officials, as well as to buy consumer goods and necessities, and to pay brideprice. Above all, as a consequence of these new changes, he has to pay fantastic interest on cash loans taken from alien money-lenders. Before the war, slumps in agricultural prices disastrously accelerated the loss of land ; fear of the courts of law kept aborigines from debt conciliation boards or relief courts ; and their ignorance meant that they could not understand or profit by new Acts passed to curb money-lenders. The real loss of land was greater than figures of registered transfers show, for many tenants who nominally retained their lands and had not sunk as low as landless labourers or debt-bondsmen had actually become mere share-croppers. In fact for long the aboriginal peasants of the highlands have had to supplement the inadequate returns of their own fields by seasonal migrations, in hundreds, to the rich plains, whether for picking or ginning cotton in the Marathi districts or for reaping wheat in the Narbada Valley. This same need of cash leads to tribal migrations, at the call of labour recruiters, to the tea-gardens of Assam, or to nearer mines and factories ; even in the Maria country you will find the village elders deputing, turn by turn, parties of youths to descend to work in the Forest Departments' saw-mills at Allapilli, or as bazaar coolies in the Godavari districts of Madras.

Where, therefore, soil surveys show that agriculture can be made to pay, clearly we must get away from these tiny individual holdings. Often where the soils will not repay the growth of cereals, a better use would be for stock-raising. With this could go the co-operative collection and marketing of such things as *mahua* flowers and seeds, myrabolams and other products of the forests outside the Government reserves ; and there could be co-operative organizations, as we have seen, for exploiting and transporting the produce of those reserves. It is claimed that collectivization of Russian farms merged twenty million holdings into a quarter of a million collective farms, the labour released thus and by the subsequent mechanization of farming migrating to towns to man the new factories. In many tribal areas of India the land is still regarded as the joint possession of the tribe, the clan or the village, and the co-operation of neighbours in each

1. See Hutton, loc. cit.

other's economic and social tasks is still a traditional practice ; they should therefore be a promising field for co-operative rather than collective farms, and the management of these co-operatives would do much to teach the tribesmen the rudiments of economic self-government.

The tribal tendency to migrate to mines and factories was accentuated by war-time calls for labour for building roads, factories, camps and aerodromes and for increasing mineral production, though the great rise in agricultural prices, which made farming pay, proved a counter-attraction back to the land. The land is always more congenial to the aboriginal, who remains at heart a peasant or a forester, so that his industrial labour is seasonal only, unless steps are taken to treat and train him properly and so turn him into an intelligent self-respecting technician, adequately housed and remunerated. The new industries to be created now in India demand a decent, permanent labour force, and it must be made impossible for employers to defeat combinations of labour by freely using seasonal relays of needy, ignorant and underpaid aboriginal factory and mine 'fodder.' Often the raw materials of industry—coal, iron, manganese, limestone, forests, water-power—are found in or near aboriginal tracts ; too often employers regard cheap aboriginal labour, which does not bother about working or housing conditions, as but another raw material. Factories spring up near the minerals partly for the same reason : even Government officers speak of aboriginals as fit only for hewing wood or drawing water, or as grist for the mill of big industry.

Jamshedpur and other industrial cities are set down among forests and their aboriginal denizens. Against the dark Kaimur Hills sulphurous smoke rises from great kilns fed with limestone by grimy chains of Gond, Kol and Baiga women passing loaded baskets from hand to hand up steps to the mouths of the kilns, while below in the quarries their men-folk gang together to quarry the limestone. Their 'camps' are often mere leaf shelters, without sanitation or amenities. Little indeed is done to evoke the intelligent, trained interest and loyalty of the tribal worker. Even when a Kol displays his tribe's natural aptitude for machinery he may get more pay ; but back he goes, his day's work done, to the same dog-kennel of a hovel as his fellow-tribesmen who are casual labourers. If it be hopelessly early to dream of aboriginal trade unionists participating in the control of industry, at least let India insist on adequate house, education and recreation facilities for the aboriginals, and on planned measures for converting them from seasonal black-legs into permanent self-respecting labourers. This will become even more necessary as industrialization proceeds, especially if rural planning involves a planned transfer of labour from farm to factory.

Finally, political democracy is completely lacking in the tribal areas, where there is no intelligent tribal participation in central

or provincial legislatures, district councils or local boards. The tribal voter does not feel that any of these are his, or realize that his votes have created them, even if, for mysterious reasons, he has been propelled by Government subordinates or emissaries of politicians and parties to a queer polling-booth, in an atmosphere redolent of the dreaded courts and towns. Leonard Barnes' imaginary Russian well says :

'The democratic social process involves the continuous re-building of society in the interests of the unpivileged and of their widening freedom and responsibility. Moreover in any kind of democratic organisation, every person who has to carry out a scheme of work on orders from above must also have taken part in formulating it as a project from below. That is the test of democracy.'¹

Judged by that test, the aboriginal, whether nominally enfranchised or not, has not started on the road to democracy. I have already quoted Elwin's scornful account of how the tribal voter voted in 1937, and there is a detailed criticism of political institutions in tribal areas in the chapter on political education in my Central Provinces Report.² Now I have never appreciated the Franchise Committee's reasons for rejecting the indirect vote in Indian elections : it still seems to me, at least in tribal areas, the only practicable way of teaching new and ignorant voters the meaning of voting. At present, in the so-called 'direct' elections, barely one voter in fifty is directly aware of the identity of those who seek his votes, or understands anything of the issues at stake, or of the electoral process in which he plays so pathetic a part.

I advocate accordingly the formation, where the old tribal or village social *panchayat* have lost their influence, of regional *panchayat* for groups of villages, to be formed by a process developing gradually from choice in village meetings, presided over by officials charged with the duty of training the villagers in selecting their representatives, into formal election. Where the tribal *panchayat* still are effective indigenous institutions, on the other hand, they would be recognized and given restored and strengthened authority. The members of both the old and the new *panchayat* would then be the only voters for elections to district councils and legislatures. We should thus ensure a real upward stream of power, from primary voters, through *panchayat* members, known to and representative of them, to local bodies and legislatures. A further advantage would be that the members of these higher bodies would have a smaller and more intelligent body of electors to canvass and keep in touch with. The group *panchayat* would gradually acquire powers and responsibilities similar to those of a Russian village soviet ; it would be a primary organ of government ; within its area it would see to the carrying out of instruc-

¹ *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, p. 232.

² *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* (Nagpur, 1944), pp. 371-95.

tions from higher government and local authorities ; it could, if it desired, set up village or group courts for petty offences and civil disputes ; it might ultimately have some control over farming and forest co-operatives.

From another point of view, this would be a form of indirect rule for the tribal areas, free from some of the risks of rule through hereditary chiefs, and utilising that feature of collective responsibility of which Professor Hutton spoke in his presidential address as so strong among the Assam tribes, and to which I referred above when I mentioned the survival among other tribes of India of a practice whereby neighbours co-operate in each other's economic and social tasks.

This paper has deliberately emphasized the economic and political side of the problem rather than the cultural. I do not undervalue the useful and beautiful elements in tribal language and culture ; on the contrary, I regard their preservation as essential, and elsewhere have advocated the basing upon them of education in tribal areas. But I have been trying to outline a practical policy, likely to command Indian support, for accelerating for the benefit of India the mobilization of the hitherto almost hidden potentialities which all who have learnt to love the aboriginal know him to possess. Teach him to hold his head high in economic and political matters, and he will of his own accord re-assert his cultural autonomy. *Primum vivere, et deinde philosophare !*

PROBLEMS OF RECONSTRUCTION IN THE ASSAM HILLS

BY J. H. HUTTON

I HAVE the honour of addressing you this year in circumstances very different from those that obtained twelve months ago, when my address was punctuated by the reports of occasional bursting bomb-shells. We have now reached a stage in these years of warfare at which it will not perhaps be premature to consider some of the problems of reconstruction as they may appear to an anthropologist. In order that they may be described as objectively as possible I shall refer primarily to that area of preliterate peoples of which I have most personal knowledge.

Reconstruction is, no doubt, from many points of view a purely administrative problem. In Kohima, the biggest collection of houses in the administrative area of the Naga Hills, not one house was left standing after the Japanese invasion, and in the district some 12,000 houses altogether needed to be rebuilt. This does not sound much as compared with the damage in this country. The total area of the Naga Hills District is only about 4,300 square miles, a little more, that is, than half the size of Wales. But the problem is accentuated by many difficulties: the timber normally available for replacing a proportion of the house accommodation annually is non-existent or destroyed, and such timber as can be found has to come from many miles distant, without any satisfactory means of transportation. The problem of providing thatch is even more difficult to solve. The impact of war prevented the planting of rice at the proper season and the people have therefore to be fed. The pigs, the staple flesh food of the country, have disappeared. There have been some 100,000 persons in urgent need of relief. This sort of situation, no doubt, in its immediate aspects, is not one calling in particular for an anthropological approach. But the purely material effects of the attempted Japanese invasion of Assam will probably, in the long run, prove to be far less important, much less profound, than its moral and psychological effects. One may consider for a moment the facts that contribute to this.

First of all the hillman will have had wide experience, much wider, that is, than he ever had before, of strangers coming in large numbers into the country, some indeed friendly, as many others hostile. In either case his way of life, hitherto almost untouched by any but the most transient of outside influences, has had to be subordinated entirely for the time being to the exigencies of military necessity. Blazing villages and looted livestock have not been outside the Naga's previous experience by any means, of course, and recollections of the Manipuri raid on Kohima in 1833, when a live boy was buried under an inscribed stone to establish the claimed limits of the Manipuri Raja's authority, were still being recounted, by one or two who had survived it, as lately as 1913. But nothing that took place then could

seriously compare with the prolonged devastation of 1944, and certainly nothing that has taken place between the two. There has not only been a temporary influx of strangers in large numbers; communications with the outside world have been very greatly increased as a result of military needs. In place of a metalled cart-road, on which fast traffic could be allowed to go only one way at a time and which ran south from the rail-head as far as Imphal in Manipur State, whence an unmetalled track led down to Burma, a four-track metalled road connecting the plains of Assam with those of Burma is said to have been constructed, as well as a second road, linking Kohima with the plains of Assam north of the old route from Dimapur. Dimapur, previously a mere rail-head market with a small settlement of foreign traders amounting to little more than a village, is reported to have grown into a large town, with a population of many thousands and several cinemas. In addition to road communications, the air is now a means of rapid communication with the outer world.

For some time, of course, the regular contacts that have existed between the Naga Hills and the rest of Assam have introduced new needs into Naga life and to some extent modified the daily round. Further, the introduction of a monetary medium of exchange, which has been going on for a century, has tended to alter indigenous standards of wealth and to shift, to some extent, the enjoyment of wealth from those with plenty of land and cattle to those in receipt of wages or earnings in cash. This has occasionally been temporarily intensified, as when a number of Nagas who had acted as carriers with the Abor Expedition of 1912 returned with, for them, large sums accumulated over several months. The same happened in a much more pronounced degree after the return of the Naga Labour Corps from France in 1918; but in both these cases the rapid expenditure of money, accumulated abroad by persons quite unaccustomed for the most part to dealing with it at all, set up a wild but very short-lived inflation of prices, after which the local economics returned to their normal aspect, with the imported money mostly exported again or remaining in the hands of the classes who had had wealth and influence before.

This time, however, it is not a case of Nagas returning from abroad with a limited amount of deferred pay, but of sums of money being poured out locally, in the form of payments to labourers and in the purchase of produce, over a period of some years. Great inflation of prices has undoubtedly taken place, but it is likely that there has been a permanent change in the relative positions of the wage-earner and the producer, which will have shifted influence and social leadership even in remote villages from the more or less hereditary guardians of customs and tradition to a younger generation of *nouveaux riches*, often sophisticated, and both ignorant and scornful of tribal tradition. The local name for such persons is *practice-wallah*, an untranslatable hybrid, a contemptuous

appellation which has reference in particular to the habit of the poorer sort of landless labourer of going periodically to the plains of Assam to earn a temporary living, with the prospect of sometimes accumulating enough to retire to his village of origin and live a life of ease and comfort. The ascendancy of the *practice-wallah* in Naga villages, if an accomplished fact, is likely to form a very disturbing factor in Naga society.

Apart from this, the opening up of communications with Assam and Burma will inevitably shift what one may call the centre of political gravity. The Naga tribes cannot avoid considering their position in regard to external affairs which hitherto have affected them but very remotely. They must now conceive of themselves as part of a larger whole, which has mostly hitherto been regarded as something alien and separate, and with the affairs of which they have had little concern. The system of their administration and their great degree of isolation had in the past tended to sustain such an attitude, but it is doubtful how far that attitude will be maintained in future. Indeed, one effect of the Japanese invasion has been apparently to give the Nagas a sense of partnership with all enemies of the Japanese. It is reported to have been very noticeable in many places, and in a manner not anticipated by officers well acquainted with the Naga and Kuki tribes, how spontaneously co-operation was given and expected, and that not with any behaviour suggesting intimidation or time serving, but rather in a spirit of collaboration to put an end to a common mischief. British and Indian troops, in short, formerly regarded with some suspicion if not hostility, were taken at once for friends and allies.

Now all this goes to suggest that if the future of the Naga tribes is to be one of social and economic comfort and content, some changes in the method of their administration will have to be provided, for, even if not needed at once; but what the emphasis of these changes will need to be is uncertain, and in order that change when it comes may be beneficent and satisfactory, some careful preliminary study is required. Lord Hailey suggested at our centenary meeting last year that there was room for anthropologists to play a greater part in the administration of British dependencies in the future than they had done in the past. He drew attention incidentally 'to the failure of those responsible for government policy to make a fuller use of the specialist in anthropological study,' but went on to point out that the particular branch of anthropology useful to administrators was that comparatively recently developed one which investigated the manner in which societies work and the fundamental impulses determining human activities within the culture studied. In India, Lord Hailey said, the problem had on the whole been different from that in Africa, as in the integrating, for instance, of Hindu or Muslim law, British administrators had had the assistance of

Indians well qualified to interpret to them the bearing of any step they might take upon the traditional custom or outlook of the people.

Even in India, however, the British Government failed to appreciate the requirements of the aboriginals, who stood outside the orbit of Hindu or Muslim cultures, and with whose traditions and needs Indian associates felt little sympathy and had but small acquaintance. The point is not without importance and bearing on the future of the hill tribes of Assam. Later, in speaking of the system of 'indirect rule' in Africa, Lord Hailey stressed the important consideration that 'the successful operation of the system demands a far more intensive study of native institutions than a previous generation thought necessary, and that study of this type requires the special technique of the anthropologist.' It is important that this should be recognised at a time when reconstruction is at its beginning, since it is just such studies of indigenous institutions that can afford, if anything can, a safe starting point for political advance.

All through the Japanese invasion of Burma and India the hill tribes generally, and in particular the Karen, Kachin, Chin, Kuki and Naga, have remained consistently loyal and helpful. This was recognised in some measure in an article in *The Times* of December 29, 1944, where it was pointed out that Naga labourers played the major role in keeping the Tamu road open for Field Marshal Alexander's retreating army in the rains of 1942; that Nagas and Kukis were to be found fighting in the Assam Rifles and in the Assam Regiment, and that at one time Naga tribesmen had the distinction of having captured more Japanese prisoners than the whole of the Fourteenth Army. The Japanese made many and great efforts to obtain the co-operation of Naga interpreters, policemen and Government officials for intelligence purposes, but all in vain. A Naga Government interpreter located a Japanese ammunition party of nine men and organized a band of villagers who surrounded and captured them. This is typical of the sort of assistance given. Another interpreter, hearing of an advanced Japanese patrol of 15 men, guided a British patrol to ambush and capture or destroy the party, which he assisted in doing himself. One Naga undertook a night trip behind the Japanese lines in Kohima village and its outskirts and came back with detailed information, which enabled troops to push into Kohima village and turn the whole Japanese position. Another brought back information so accurate that targets on the Japanese supply line could be pin-pointed and destroyed from the air with the greatest precision.

Similarly Chins and Kachins in Burma have been waging since the end of 1942 'a real "people's war" against the Japanese, with levies, Home Guards, and ordinary villagers fighting as armed civilians.' The same applies to Nagas and Kukis: 'cheerfully

facing torture and death they organised an efficient intelligence system for the service of the allies; they operated tirelessly around, behind, and across the Japanese lines; they inflicted formidable casualties on the enemy; they made their country an impenetrable screen behind which our own forces gathered. They cheerfully placed all they had, whether of men or of material, at our entire disposal.' Sir Andrew Clow, the Governor of Assam, when addressing the Assam Legislative Assembly, paid a high tribute to the way in which they 'acted when their lands were overrun,' speaking of 'their tenderness to our own wounded, of the courage with which they faced loss of their homes and substance.' It was indeed very largely due to their loyalty and co-operation that the invasion of Assam was defeated and the supply route of the American forces up the Assam Railway kept open and intact.

Now the loyalty and heroism of the Naga tribes have been recognised by the Governor-General in Council, who has decided to commemorate his appreciation of their staunchness in the face of violence and threats and the blandishments of those traitors who accompanied the Japanese, by the construction of a modern hospital at Kohima, with provision for travelling dispensaries to serve the interior of the district. This is well enough as far as it goes; but one is immediately moved, on hearing it, to ask what it is that the people want themselves. For there has long been an insistent demand for education, and this is not merely for the opportunity for selected individuals to be sent to centres of somewhat higher education than is available locally, to Shillong for instance, or even to Calcutta, but for schools of higher grade in the district itself, at which the great bulk at any rate of the pupils should be natives of the district and the staff as far as possible drawn from the same source, with European supervision. The district has for many years asked for its own High School, or even some centre of still more advanced teaching than that.

This demand for education is one which cannot be denied, if anything is to be granted at all. Yet one is entitled to enquire closely into the motives behind it. Hogbin maintains, that the Solomon Islander has been attracted towards education in the belief that a knowledge of reading and writing can lead him to the almost unlimited wealth which he associates with the European who possesses these arts, and with the power and influence which he attributes to wealth. Power and influence he wants for their own sake, wealth as the means to them, and education as the means to wealth. There can be little doubt but the Naga covets schools and schooling with much the same ultimate objective. Schools lead to Government posts, Government posts to good pay and pension, and often even more directly to the influential positions which good pay makes possible of attainment by him. If he realises that Government posts are comparatively few and that the institution of schools and colleges in each district can provide

such a vista of advancement for very few only of all who attend them, he is undeterred; for surely he, or rather *his* children, will be the lucky ones. Disillusionment may well be followed in a later generation by a partial revulsion against schools and their products, but that is not yet.

Meanwhile there are other reasons also for desiring the power that comes from reading and writing. For one thing, the hill tribes have a very vivid fear of exploitation by the people of the plains, nor is that fear entirely without reason. It must be remembered that the language and cultures of the hill tribes are for the most part entirely alien to those of the Hindus and Muslims of the Assam and Surma valleys to the west or of the Buddhists of the plains to the east, and it has been a common experience of hillmen in the past to be cheated in some way or other by shopkeepers and contractors in the plains of Assam. These have taken advantage of the intricacies and delays of the civil procedure in regulation courts to evade payments due to tribesmen, who are unable to remain in the plains in order to sue there and not entitled, under existing codes, to sue in their own district for claims arising outside it. Education, the hillmen believe, will enable them, in their own district at any rate, to have an administrative staff of their own kith and kin. They have mostly an intense pride of race and an intense love of liberty and independence and they are anxious to ensure at least a measure of 'home rule.' Nor has it been lost on them that Mr Jinnah has claimed the whole of Assam for his Pakistan, and his movement is one with which they have not the remotest sympathy.

It is not, of course, to be supposed that the Assam hill tribes have lived in complete isolation. For the last hundred years they have been subject to an increasing number of external contacts and recently, largely owing to the activities of the American Baptist Mission in the Naga Hills and of Welsh missionaries in the Khasi and Lushai hills, there has been a spread of quasi-European culture. I have before me as I speak a pink-and-white folding card embellished with an embossed butterfly and printed in gold, announcing that Mrs Mineli earnestly requests the pleasure of the presence of A. B. at the wedding of her second daughter at the Lazami Church at 2 p.m., on Saturday the 24th July, 1943, and thereafter at a reception at the residence of (apparently) the bride and bridegroom. To one who knows the village of Lazami, with its collection of thatched huts of bamboo wattle, innocent of any water supply other than the village spring or of any form of sanitation other than that provided by the village pigs, there is something more than faintly incongruous about this rather pretentious gold-printed invitation; but it is significant of the times, and of the changes that have been taking place and will go on taking place, however much one distrusts them, in these remote hill areas.

The point I wish to lay emphasis on is that the events of the past few years have not only very greatly extended the area and accelerated the rate of change, but have also laid upon the protecting power a heavy obligation to see that the changes which are taking place shall be beneficial rather than detrimental and shall benefit the many rather than the few, and in particular that whatsoever form the greatly desired education may take, it shall be of real benefit to the people themselves in advancing their moral and material welfare, and shall not create a superfluity of would-be lawyers who need to foment the internal discords of their fellow-villagers in order to create employment and an income for themselves. The danger is a very real one, for the general trend of the changes taking place is likely to involve a shift of influence from the traditional village authorities to new men ; it is likely to involve a shift of values from those of an economy almost moneyless to those bound up with the introduction of a currency in cash. Moreover this danger is likely to be greatly enhanced by the traditional British policy of substituting the rule of law for the rule of authority.

It has recently been aptly pointed out that the social organization of any people varies according to the type of production and exchange adopted by it or forced upon it, and it follows that radical changes in the make-up of society are likely to attend a shift over from a system which is, effectively, moneyless, to one in which exchange depends on the circulation of money. A moneyless economy works well enough with a clan system of society, in which the various households depend upon their own efforts to supply their primary needs and the undue ascendancy of any particular family or person is more or less automatically barred by the difficulty of amassing wealth when wealth consists in the direct produce of labour in the fields and in the herding of cattle ; any economic surplus that is not distributed, as it so often is, in the form of public entertainment, is then of its very nature extremely perishable, as well as bulky, and cannot therefore be accumulated in very great quantity. An economy based on a cash currency, on the other hand, affords an immediate opportunity to individuals to amass personal fortunes and for a few to collect into their hands the means of production formerly distributed between many, and the persons who succeed in snatching this opportunity are often those with no hereditary responsibility for the welfare of their kinsmen or fellow villagers. Indeed they have often proved to be aliens in blood and language, imported from outside by the same contacts that have brought in the new economy, and understanding the opportunities of that economy a great deal better than simple people unfamiliar with its technique. But whether those who profit are aliens or not, the introduction of a new economy is likely to entail a very great change in the social organization of the people affected by it. The nature, extent and implications of

such a change, and of the social disturbance involved in it, are proper subjects for investigation by trained social anthropologists.

Another subject on which investigation is needed is that of the problems involved in the application of what is known as 'indirect rule.' The Assam hillmen are undoubtedly capable of a considerable measure of self-government, but perhaps only in small units, at least to start with. Some form of indirect rule might suitably be employed in their case; indeed it is probably already in use in places. At the same time it is a method that has dangers of its own and cannot be employed indiscriminately, as it often involves some risk of becoming reactionary or at least of delaying development. The support by Government of hereditary chiefs is apt to lead to nepotism and oppression, since such abuse of power is then unchecked by the fear of rebellion.

A very important feature in the administration of the Assam hill tracts is the feature of collective responsibility. Village responsibility is simple enough when embodied in the person of an autocratic chief, as it often is. But it may work just as well with villages controlled by a body of garrulous and inefficient old men, holding office from a rota of age grades, or by a few even less efficient headmen, appointed by a sort of compromise between election and voluntary undertaking, as in the Angami Naga country. At any rate the principle of collective responsibility works so well in the Assam hills, with any sort of political institution from autocracy to extreme democracy, that no civil police are necessary outside the areas of foreign immigration, and this decentralized system of justice is accompanied by an exceptionally low rate of crime. As subdivisional officer at Mokokchung I found it practicable, when passing a sentence of imprisonment, to avoid the necessity of impressing unwilling carriers to take and bring back the kit of a prisoner's escort to headquarters (a round trip of some 180 miles) by giving the prisoner a letter to the Superintendent of the Kohima gaol and instructions to take it and to report himself for hard labour within so many days, his jail warrant being sent by post. This sort of police administration is so much less burdensome in inconvenience and in expense than any other, that it is most important that it should survive in the administrative changes that are bound to take place.

The language question is another that needs careful investigation, the more particularly as the education question is intimately bound up with it. In most districts of the hills in Assam there is an indigenous hill language different from the language in adjoining districts. Primary education is generally given in the indigenous language, but for secondary education the problem always arises as to whether this should be given in English or Assamese. If Assamese is to be used, then a new and difficult character has to be learned, for the unwritten hill languages have all been recorded in Roman script, and that script is again necessary at a later stage.

Moreover, the average hillman is handicapped as regards matriculation, for the University of Calcutta does not recognise his own language as a vernacular and he must therefore study a foreign language to be examined in, and then learn two more. In the case of the Naga Hills the position is complicated by the existence, in an area half the size of Wales, of at least sixteen different languages (to say nothing of dialects), differing as much as those of the continent of Europe, and many of which have not yet been reduced to writing at all. In some villages different languages are spoken on opposite sides of a street; children thus grow up bilingual from the start and may speak three or four languages by the time they reach manhood. A sort of pigeon Assamese passes as a *lingua franca* and is often used in a rough and ready form in Roman script. In such circumstances the whole problem of education needs very careful consideration, not by linguists perhaps so much as by psychologists.

It is a psychologist's business again to investigate the economic skills of the hill tribes. If the standard of life is to be raised it must probably be done on an agricultural rather than an industrial basis. The cultivation of silk, cotton, fruit, lac or potatoes can probably be introduced, or greatly improved where they exist already; but potentialities, certainly of locality and perhaps of natural disposition, must differ greatly from tribe to tribe. And this question of cultivation is intimately associated also with the problems of the denudation of the soil, afforestation and irrigation. It was more or less by accident that I discovered that one of the main difficulties in inducing a village which lived by *jhuming*, that is by the practice of shifting cultivation, to make a serious effort at the substitution of irrigated rice for dry, was ignorance of appropriate magico-religious ceremonial. A better-trained anthropologist would have known enough to look for this factor, of course.

But the general question of the activities of the Forestry Department and of its effects on the social and economic life of the hill tribes is a most important one in Assam. Rightly or wrongly, floods in the plains of Assam have often been attributed to the clearing of forest land for cultivation in the hills. And the usual method of hill cultivation does undoubtedly lead to denudation. On the other hand, that is often the only method possible. Irrigated terraces need a permanent water supply and that again is dependent on forest growth, so that when once these hill-tops have been stripped of forest a vicious circle exists: no terraces without water; no water without forests; the forests gave gone, and therefore there can be no terracing till they have been restored; meanwhile continual *jhuming* leads to still worse denudation, for the people must grow rice to eat. Terracing itself raises fresh problems when it is introduced, for it creates a plentiful breeding-ground for mosquitoes and malaria. Also, by changing the nature of the use of land it raises new questions of water-rights,

communal labour, title, inheritance, and the exercise of chiefly authority which may not have arisen at all under the previous *jhuming* economy. Apart from that, the legal theory of the Assam Government seems to classify all land not under permanent, *i.e.*, irrigated, cultivation as State Forest, though actually, in the Naga Hills at any rate, nearly all of it is individually owned by some person or family under a traditional title going back to a date before the British occupation.

Excise is another question which needs special treatment in hill districts. Home-brewed alcoholic beverages made from rice, millet, or other grains are probably an important source of vitamins, and to some extent a substitute for sugar, little or none of which can be locally grown. The prevention of distilling, a new art in the hills, is an excellent thing, but Government Excise shops selling distilled liquor as a monopoly tend to lead to the suppression of home-brewing in favour of the Government monopoly; that, at any rate, has been the case among tribes like the Lalungs, Mikirs, and Kacharis, who live under the regularized administration of a plains district. Thus a very deleterious taste for arrack is developed and the consumption of a drug, for it is no less, is substituted for that of a food which, if stimulating, is still of much value. The administration of excise, too, leads to the employment of rewards, informers, sneak-thieves and gangsters who make an income out of finding out when a marriage or other feast is likely to take place and an unfortunate host is likely to be found with his back room reasonably full of drink brewed for a special occasion on which his own society expects a traditional form of hospitality. Excise administration obviously need not necessarily be oppressive, but in practice it very commonly is so. For the Naga Hills special measures have been needed in the past to control the use of opium, which was prevented by drastic executive action from spreading in the Ao country and was ultimately practically eliminated there. In the Mikir hills the licence system is also used; but the fact that the licensed dealers to whom the Mikirs have to go for their opium are almost invariably plainsmen of some kind, and quite unamenable to any social influence which the hillmen can bring to bear on them, leads to all sorts of malpractices on the part of the opium vendors, which would at worst be greatly reduced if the Mikirs could be employed in that capacity, since they would have to live in the society of other Mikirs and be subject to some local control by the opinion of that society.

These are some of the problems which present themselves in the administration of any primitive area in Assam. Others, no doubt even more serious, will arise later. One can foresee the trouble likely to be caused by questions of mining, boring for oil, or developing hydro-electric power in hill areas, to say nothing of soil erosion and re-afforestation, which have been already mentioned. The Nagas, like most other hillmen in Assam, would undoubtedly

prefer to be administered independently as a separate charge, by a system in which their particular interests ran no risk of being ignored and the individual identity of tribes no risk of being lost. The difficulty on the face of things is financial, for the revenue obtainable from these hills is not enough to maintain an expensive administration. The original occupation of the hills, both along the frontier and between the two valleys of the Surma and the Brahmaputra, was in the nature of an insurance policy, first taken out about 100 years ago, for the peaceable development of the plains. In that form the policy perhaps hardly needs to be renewed, though of that I am by no means certain; but in any case it is time a new one was taken out through the study of the population in the process of change, with a view to promoting its contentment, raising its income and its standard of living, and studying its productive and institutional problems.

The problems of reconstruction which I have mentioned here are those merely of one limited area of Assam hill tract. Similar problems on a wider scale await investigation and solution in Burma, Malaya, and Siam, in Indo-China and Indonesia as well as in New Guinea and Oceania generally, and under conditions in many ways analogous to those in Assam. I have already quoted from *The Times* of last December due acknowledgement of the fact that in Burma, particularly in the Chin and Kachin country, the villagers waged 'a real "people's war" against the Japanese,' and the same has no doubt been the case in New Guinea and in Borneo. The article points out that 'the attachment of the Nagas, the Chins, the Karens and other hill warriors to the allied cause is the harvest of seed sown over the course of long years—seed of justice, of sympathy, of kindness by successive generations of British officials.' That is well enough for the past, but some advance is wanted for the future, and that advance must be based on a proper and on an informed study of the problems involved.

The case for applied anthropology in the reconstruction of Burma has been ably advocated by Mr H. N. C. Stevenson in a paper to this Institute, published in *Man* early this year. Among other things he has drawn attention to the fact that the Burmese will want to control the horseshoe of surrounding hills which are economically vital to Burma, while the inhabitants of these hills, who are not Burmans, will want some control of their own destinies; moreover economic rivalries are likely to lead to inter-racial difficulties.

The problem in Malaya is rather different, probably, though here again there is likely to be a clash of economic interests between the indigenous Malays and Chinese and Indian settlers, to say nothing of the forest tribes, few in numbers and politically unimportant. Not dissimilar problems are likely to be present in Borneo, in the Philippine Islands and indeed throughout Indo-

nesia, while in New Guinea and the Solomons conditions more nearly resemble the Assam hills, perhaps. In Fiji and Samoa, as no doubt in some other parts of Oceania, there is likely to be a situation offering problems more like those in Malaya than those in Assam ; but the problems in all these areas seem to have a good deal in common, and they are very likely to be shared also by the Netherlands East Indies.

Now the general lines on which in the past it has usually been sought to reconcile the life of alien societies living in close contact with each other have been those of acculturation. Often enough the method has been successful, but it does not always work. In most parts of the British Isles, from Alderney to the Orkneys, it has done well enough, but it has not had conspicuous success west of St. George's Channel. Nor has it worked quite satisfactorily as between German and Wend in Prussia, between Basque or Catalan and Spaniard proper, between French and Italian in Savoy. As between Muslim and Hindu in Upper India it has made little headway, if any. So it is not unlikely perhaps that the solution for the problems in south-east Asia and in the Australasian Islands may lie in some form of what Mr Furnivall, in his very important work on the Netherland Indies,¹ has labelled 'plural society.' He has pointed out how peoples of different nationalities, Indonesian, European, Indian and Chinese for instance, may live together in more or less insulated social units, performing different economic functions all of which contribute to the general welfare.

This type of symbiosis is seen at its extreme, of course, in the caste system of India. There is no reason why it should not elsewhere exist without the drawbacks of the Indian system, but this Indian 'plural state' is not the only form that has drawbacks. Furnivall has pointed out clearly² some general disadvantages of such a policy. 'In a plural society,' he says, 'there is no common will except, possibly, in matters of supreme importance, such as resistance to aggression from outside,' and he likens such a society to a confederation in which the constituent elements live their own lives though united for certain ends, but, having common territorial limits, have not the remedy of secession if the Union is found to be intolerable, the elements being so intermingled that secession is indistinguishable from anarchy. Further, since 'social wants are sectional, and there is no social demand common to all the several elements,' social demand in a plural society is disorganised, and ceases to embrace the whole scope of social life, with the result that within each section the economic aspect of life is over-emphasised. While in a unitary state with

¹ *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy*, by J. S. Furnivall with an Introduction by Jonkheer Mr. A. C. D. de Graeff, Governor-General of Netherlands India, 1926-31. (Cambridge, 1944).

² *op. cit.*, ch. xiii.

a homogeneous society different professions have their several functions—soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, apothecary or ploughman as the case may be—these share a common life as citizens ; but in a plural society each may live within a closed compartment, so that the community tends to be organised for production rather than for social life. It needs to be held together by some external authority, for the centripetal force of organic unity is lacking. In such a society the principle of basing rule on law tends to disaster, as the law cannot be informed by any common will nor any common sense of duty to a common society which does not in fact exist. Rule therefore must be based ultimately on some specific authority. The Dutch have solved the problem in the Netherlands Indies by a system of indirect rule and a species of ' federation ' which brings into harmony the differing economic demands of the various elements of the plural society and the integration of these elements into a single social framework.

Whatever the solution of our problems is to be, the subject is one which already calls urgently for examination by anthropologists, and which is likely to cry out more insistently still in the near future. The whole of south-east Asia and the adjacent islands have been disorganized and wasted by war and by the economic upheaval attending it. Some change in the social relations of the inhabitants is inevitable, and it is imperative that these relations should, if it may be, improve rather than deteriorate. We believe here that anthropologists can help to bring this about ; the fields indeed are ripening to harvest, but the labourers are far too few.

WHAT OF THE TRIBES?

BY F. KINGDON-WARD

ANYONE who has ever lived for a year on the North-East Frontier, whether in Assam or Burma, or indeed in any of the mountainous regions of South-East Asia, cannot fail to have taken some interest in the tribes—an interest aroused either by a desire for knowledge, or by curiosity not necessarily scientific. To-day many people are asking themselves seriously, 'what will be the future of these tribes in an independent India?'

We may grant that the question is academic, or at least of secondary importance; no consideration for, no obligation to, the tribes is likely to delay for a single hour the granting of home rule to India. Nevertheless, forewarned is forearmed, and one may as well try to put the issue squarely before deciding what the future of several million people may be.

Among the many difficult problems which have to be solved before peace can be anything more than a truce—problems raised by religious, racial, territorial and economic rivalries, but all of them (except the first) ultimately resolving themselves into a question of the pressure of population on the food supply and trade of the world and by the unattainable ideal, security—the problem of the tribes in South-East Asia in general and in East India in particular, may not seem of the first importance. But it is by no means trivial.

The frontier ranges of Burma and of Assam are at present 'excluded areas', excluded that is to say, from the Government of India Act, and are inhabited by a great variety of 'races' (in the biological sense of the word), all comprised in the term 'backward peoples.' Not for them the elusive blessings of democracy as practised in the West. Actually their own social structure is generally democratic, marred neither by a religious nor by a social caste system. Chiefs, medicine-men, priests, seers, diviners and a few others may be privileged persons upto a point; and generally the chieftainship of a tribe or clan passes from father to son. But, apart from a few exceptions, there is equality as far as that can be maintained in the face of the fact that men are not born equal—as men.

Here I shall confine myself to the tribes of the Assam and Burma frontiers. This is a sufficiently large and difficult area, including not less than 40 principal tribes (not to mention the numerous clans) with a total population which may be guessed at anything between 3,000,000 and 5,000,000, though even the higher figure may be conservative. The tribal area indicated covers a superficial area of about 120,000 square miles, but the real area is more than twice as great, owing to the dissection of the country and the innumerable valleys. On the basis of 50 persons per square mile, average (=1 village of 10 huts, 5 persons to a family) this would give a population of six millions. Of course, there are many hundred of square miles with no villages, or even huts

at all ; but there are also thickly populated valleys like the Dihang, the Ankyang and the Ngawchang, and areas like the Naga Hills, the ' Triangle ' and elsewhere. Probably five million tribesmen on the Assam-Burma frontiers is not so wide of the mark. What of these people in the near future, backward minorities in a seething world ?

Now, the future of the tribes, at present more or less under British protection (though the war proved that some of them at least could protect themselves better than we could protect them) is a complex political problem, or at any rate the bureaucrats try to make out this it is. The layman, however, omitting details, sees three possible answers to the question ; what is to happen to the tribes ? The answer, of course, depends to a large extent on the nature of the treaty that may be made between Great Britain and India ; it is certain that any treaty must include an agreement on the tribal question, and the same for Great Britain and Burma.

The three possible answers to the above questions are as follows :—

- (i) The frontier tribes remain part of India and Burma respectively ; when Indian and Burmese governments take over control, they take over the tribes also.
- (ii) The frontier tracts of India and Burma, now ' excluded areas ' remain excluded, no longer part of India and Burma. The tribes become independent—as some of them are to all intents and purposes, already.
- (iii) The British, while having no say in the governments of India and Burma, continue to rule over the hill tribes, whether as part of those countries or not.

There is, indeed, a fourth possibility, but it seems at first-sight remote. It is that the hill tracts should be handed over to another Power or to other States.

Before we examine these possible solutions one by one it might be helpful to say something more about the tribes in general these ' backward peoples ' whose backwardness is so much insisted upon. And the first thing we notice about them is that none of them are Indians in any sense of the word. On the contrary they are all Mongolians in origin. Most of them, at any rate, have come down from the north, out of the great void of Central Asia, reaching out for the plains of the southern peninsulas—India, Burma, Indo-China—and have been boxed up, in the mountains by those who reached the plains ahead of them.

It is no doubt natural that traveller passing through the belt of tribal territory should emphasize the contrasts between the numerous tribes he runs across, which superficially are striking enough—obvious differences in language, dress, customs, tempe-

rament. Nevertheless, marked as the differences are, the many assemblances are fundamental, and even more striking. The chief one, of race, I have already mentioned. Again, none of the tribes has a written language—which, though a negative, is perhaps the test of what does or does not constitute a tribe.

All cultivate the soil and grow the same crops in the same way. The standard of living, and of culture, is about the same everywhere ; at least there are no glaring contrasts.

As to their degree of backwardness, this depends mainly on our standard of measurement. The tribesman's decorative art is primitive ; music, painting, poetry, sculpture are practically non-existent. His life is unmechanized, or rather it is primitively mechanized, for the only sources of power open to him are those supplied by man and domestic animals, by the rushing brook, and by wind. Nor has he developed any taste for bodily ease—a comfortable bed, for example. Judged by the lack of conveniences and refinements, our tribesman is of course 'backward.' Many people are apt to call him a savage, which is indefensible.

Certainly the tribes of the frontier are industrially backward. The machine age has passed them by, or failed to reach them. But all peasant populations are industrially backward. The tribes are also agriculturally backward, but no more so than the peasants of the Balkans in progressive Europe. They are backward socially, too, though only because their social organization is simple. Thus if we compare the hill tribe standard with the most up-to-date standards of living (and dying) in the West, it does appear somewhat backward. On the other hand, if we compare him with a real savage, we shall probably have to admit that he is almost as civilized as a Western European—though far less comfortable. Otherwise the terms savage and civilized are meaningless.

It is true that the one thing common to all the hill tribes of South-east Asia is that they have no writing—nor have any of the tribes of the New World for that matter. They must, however, have sprung from a parent body which had a written language, and have since lost the art. Almost every tribe has a tradition of a 'parchment book,' and curious or grotesque legends of how the book came to be destroyed. It is only reasonable to suppose that such legends are founded on fact or were invented to explain facts and that only a few centuries ago these tribes broke away from a more powerful and highly-cultured parent body.

Consider the culture of the Frontier tribes which, except for the lost art of writing, compares favourably with that of many Western agricultural peoples, especially in mountainous regions. Most of these people cannot write, or read either, though they belong to races of high culture. The tribes can work metals—iron and silver—they weave and dye cloth, make fish traps, mills looms, pots, build houses and bridges, cultivate a score of crops, keep domestic animals and can make a hundred useful things out of

bamboo, cane, palm leaves and jungle ropes.

Clearly they are a highly civilized people.

Let us now carefully examine the three (or four) possible solutions of the problem presented by the Frontier Tribes, and the various implications.

The first solution was that the Governments of India and Burma respectively continue to administer the tribal areas. We may observe that in that case there is no question of home rule, so far as the tribes are concerned, for, as pointed out, the tribes are Mongolian. True, it would be less paradoxical in Burma, since the Burmese share a common Tibeto-Burman origin with the Kachins, who are the largest tribe in Burma. But, it does happen that there is no love lost between Burmans and Kachins.

One assumes, of course, that the Indian Government would be willing to take over the tribal areas. Possibly it would not wish to saddle itself with so great a responsibility, in view of the very serious domestic problems it would have to solve. In that case it must come to some arrangement with them. If it has decided to accept responsibility for them, it would have to be prepared to enforce its decrees and that might prove difficult. Whether frontier 'incidents' became more or less common than they are—to-day would depend mainly on the nature of the Indian Government towards the tribes, and the strength of the frontier force and police, whose duty it would be to keep the tribes from becoming turbulent. There is no *a priori* reason why things should not go on much as they do now, though that may be fatuous optimism, or wishful thinking. The tribes themselves, of course, might resent the change of masters.

A second possible solution is that the excluded areas remain excluded, not only politically, but geographically; that they cease to form part of India or part of Burma. That on the face of it, is a satisfactory solution, and in accordance with history, because it is only since the British conquered India that the tribal areas have become part of the Indian Empire, although some of the tribes did pay tribute to—or received Danegeldt from—earlier local rulers. If the tribal areas are literally excluded, two possibilities suggest themselves:—(a) they become independent; (b) the British continue to administer them. As to the tribes becoming independent, in accordance with the modern parrot cry for self-determination, there would be a good many independent states—almost as many as there are tribes in fact, since there is no hope of their union. But apparently there is no lower limit to the size and power of a community whose prayer or demand for autonomy will not be sympathetically listened to by the Big Sixes and Sevens. Autonomy then, though hardly probable, is not beyond the realms of possibility.

However, it is hardly necessary to point out the dangers of such a solution. Wedged between two great contrasted civilizations

as ancient as any in Asia, based on agriculture but both trying to become industrialized as a means of keeping abreast of the machine age and of solving the population-food problem, this no man's land would become even more backward. It would be exploited from both sides; from the north and east more than from the south and west. No doubt, too, the tribes, or some of them would make periodic raids on the plains, the scale of which would be limited only by their capacity for combination and their success in acquiring weapons. This would lead to punitive expeditions and retaliation with unpredictable results. The frontier hills would certainly become unsafe for traders, and the plains for highlanders. Three-fifths of Burma would be divided against itself. The hillmen are difficult to get at, and the hill tracts difficult to travel in, particularly during the rainy season, as the Japanese found to their cost. Yet in these days of sudden descent from the skies, even the frontier hills are not noticeably safe. Raids of that sort, however, are costly, and the effective means of bringing pressure to bear on the hill tribes is by a system of blockade. However, constant unrest on the frontier—not always well defined to-day and certain to be in the melting pot with a change of government in India, if it is not there already—would inevitably lead to friction between major states on either side of the buffer. In a word independence under modern conditions would lead to chaos, and in a world organizing itself for Big and Bigger Business, chaos is indefensible.

Nor is it likely that any of the tribes would demand independence. In all but name they have it now. Who interferes if a Tibetan kills a Nung in the Adung valley? Or if a Yawyin steals another man's wife in the Ahkyang valley? The monastery of Tawang in Tibet appoints the magistrate who administers Dirang Dzong in the Ballipara district of Assam. He might be relieved to-morrow and the Assam Government know nothing of it for months. Clearly all these little differences are settled locally, by influential village headmen, committees and the like, acting in accordance with age-old custom. The only restrictions on the actions of the tribes—and they can hardly be enforced in these days—are such as they might themselves approve of. Slavery, head-hunting and other religious economic practices, being unsocial, had to go sooner or later in the ordinary course of progress. Taxes in money or kind would have to be paid to somebody; and even if they do not approve of or understand the uses to which the money is put they are less heavy than most of them would pay without question to their chiefs.

The tribes would be far more likely to ask for protection than to demand complete independence. Children do not demand independence from their parents—while they are children; they do expect protection. In fact, it is certain that the tribes will ask for protection from one another, as well as from their here-

ditary enemies. Thus the Kachins will ask for protection from the Burmese, the Nungs from the Lisus, the Mishmis from other Mishmis, the Hkamtis from Dulengs, and so on. It is equally certain that attempts will be made, by people who display their 'consciences' 'principles' and other morbid growths, and devote a great deal more time and thought to them than to the common weal—but who are generally either frightened of responsibility, or just anxious to exercise their rights as democrats in a free country in full limelight—to force independence down their unwilling throats.

Economically, labour is about the only commodity which the hills could export to the plains, where it is not required. An impoverished region which can barely support its own small population, and has no wealth which will attract capital from outside, must import everything beyond the bare necessities of life if it is to raise the standard of living. True, the naturalist can find treasure in the hills and knowledge and beauty in many forms. But the naturalists' job is not primarily to create material wealth. And, though the greatness of a State is not to be measured solely by its prowess in arms, but also by its contributions to science, literature and art, politicians have never yet grasped this elementary truth.

Undoubtedly the strongest argument against complete independence for the tribes is their mutual suspicion of one another. If the tribes of the Balkans—now after half a century of wars, unstably condensed into high-explosive nations—cannot yet hit it off without hitting each other, much less can the tribes of India's eastern frontier. In a perfect world, independence would be the perfect solution. But the world is so far imperfect that it is quite the most impracticable solution. But as I remarked above, it is unnecessary to emphasize the arguments against a solution which raises far more problems than it solves.

Finally, one may suggest that, so far as the 'backward areas' are concerned, things remain as they are. In other words, when India is independent, Great Britain continues to administer the hill-tribes, also independently. Such an arrangement of course, with adequate safeguards, would have to be embodied in the treaty to be drawn up between Britain and India for their mutual advantage. Would the arrangement work? Unfortunately the tribal areas are completely landlocked, so that unless the right of unrestricted passage through foreign though, it may be hoped, (friendly, territory) is granted and embodied in the treaty, Great Britain would not have access to the hill tracts unless by air. The only alternative would be genuine colonization of the empty spaces. It is difficult at this moment in the world's history to imagine Europeans settling in, say, the Eastern Himalayas, as they settled for example, in New Zealand a hundred years ago—although there are many villages in the interior several thousand feet above sea

level where they might settle and be in many ways better off than they were when they first settled in New Zealand or North America.

But the strategic position of the hill tracts is such that it might be vital for the defence of India that they remain a part of India though the Indian Government might still agree to their administration remaining in British hands in return for concessions elsewhere—might, possibly, welcome it.

There is, however, one serious difficulty which is rarely mentioned when the future of the tribes—is being discussed, and that is the age-old difficulty of cost. 'How much will it cost?' is the invariable question governments pose to any reform proposed after a war in which no one ever counted the cost. The administration of tribal areas is far from self-supporting; and the not inconsiderable deficit is made good from outside revenue. If Great Britain, singlehanded, continues to rule the tribes after she ceases to rule India, she cannot expect the Central Government to pay for the administration. It is true that a province like Assam, in close contact with tribal areas, would have something to gain, and might be expected to pay for the advantage of security. But it is not really a provincial concern, since the entire land frontier of India is involved.

There is also the matter of Danegeldt—posa it is called in Assam; money paid to the tribes so long as they behave, and abstain from raiding. Of course, it is cheaper to pay the tribes for behaving well than to punish them for behaving badly. This is not so humiliating as it looks, being a contract inherited from the Assamese when the British came to Assam. Moreover, it is being gradually expunged. This system of bringing the tribes not to raid is unknown in Burma.

So, what with posa and the cost of administering a huge area, the hill tribes are an expensive luxury. If the Indian government took no part in the administration, and contributed nothing to the cost, then 'outside' revenue would inevitably mean the poor British tax payer. Unless of course, the British administered the hill tracts in a judicial capacity.

Let us now turn to the fourth and last possible solution (other than a compromise) of the tribal problem—namely that the backward areas be handed over to other states, adjacent to the frontiers of India, or to the United Nations. One argument in favour of this step has already been put forward; these areas were not originally part of India, but were in a sense no-man's-land taken over, as British India came up against the mountain barrier, for security reasons. . . . I have also remarked that the frontier tribes are not (Indians there are of course many Indian tribes in peninsular India). It is quite clear, therefore, that the tribal areas are neither Hindustan nor Pakistan but Mongolistan.

It would appear, then, that States such as China and Tibet have

some claim to the tribal areas. Nor would it be true to say that those countries have done nothing for the tribes. Tibetan monks have crossed the eastern Himalayan passes and founded settlements in the jungle at the sources of the Subansiri and other rivers, built wooden temples, opened up trading posts, and generally improved the lot of the semi-savage 'Lop.' The Chinese brought culture, and terraced rice fields, to the Lashi of the Htawgaw hill tracts, and their pedlars have been up and down the remotest valley of North Burma, selling cheap cloth and consumer goods to the Nungs, Lisus and other tribes.

So far as the Burma frontier is concerned, however, the Burmese, themselves a Mongolian race, have a better claim to the whole of modern Burma than have the Chinese. Unfortunately there is no love lost between the Burmese and some of the biggest tribes, who will certainly prefer to remain under British protection.

At this point it is pertinent to ask whether it would not be possible to create hill states on the model of Bhutan, which is entirely independent as regards internal administration, but not entirely as regards external affairs, being bound by treaty. It might be a good target to aim at, but how is it to be achieved? The Bhutaneese are a more homogeneous and a more cultured, people than any of the tribes. They have also the advantage of a unifying religion, backed by the highly organised Tibetan Lama priesthood. Communications in Bhutan are not exactly good, but are much better than one might expect. There are reasonably good mule paths everywhere, magnificent iron chain suspension or timber cantilever bridges span the rushing rivers, endless flights of stone steps ascend the valleys. Beautiful monasteries cling like birds' nests to the cliffs, and small wooden and stone towns adorn the fertile valleys, where the climate is passable. But the question again arises—how many such states would there need to be? Not all of the tribes are sufficiently advanced for such a corporate existence.

The greatest difficulty is that many of the tribes are still semi-nomadic. Some, like the Lisus of Burma, are still moving westwards from the Salween Valley, under pressure from the east, or in search of land. Others, like the Kachin family, are still moving south, their final destination not yet achieved, though they have reached the latitude of Mandalay. Others again like the Nungs and Darus of north Burma, move about locally, as they destroy the jungle and exhaust the soil. A village rarely persists for ten years in the same spot.

Then, too, the fact that new tribes can spring into—existence, not overnight, but in a comparatively short time, argues a degree of instability. Thus the adventurous and ambitious Lushai, who now occupy a large area of the Assam-Burma—ranges, crystallized out of the racial flux less than two—centuries ago. The lack of homogeneity is obvious.

However, given time, there is no reason why cultural centres

comparable with, say, Punaka in Bhutan, should not be established in every tribal area, communicating with modern air overland transport routes. Within the last 30 years Fort Hertz and Sumptra Bum have been built out in the blue, the former over 200 miles from rail-head : the latter, deep in the Kachin Hills at an altitude of 3,500 feet, is a revelation. Loimwe, when it was first occupied at the end of last century, was even further from the railway, being over 400 miles distant. To-day, after nearly half a century, it is a garden city in the hills. Assam has nothing to compare with these places, except perhaps Kohima ; and though, they are no more than police outposts they point the way.

But why emphasize these remote and unheard-of villages when there are modern cities like Darjeeling and Simla high up in the hills ! True, these stand on the outer spurs which slope—abruptly down to the plains and the sea. Nevertheless, they were founded more than a century ago, before the internal combustion engine was invented or even thought of, when flying was a dream in the womb of future, and even railway travel was primitive. Such towns, and even finer, ones, could easily be built to-day 100 or 200 miles deeper into the hills, and 2,000 feet higher up and still be in touch with ‘civilization’ by wireless and by road, rail or air.

That perhaps, is the answer to the tribal problem—the one thing that may save these interesting people from the fate which overtook the Tasmanian aborigines, and is slowly overtaking the Maori ; extermination in the clash of cultures. If every tribal area had three or four such rallying points, to which tribes-men could resort to buy and sell, gossip and make contact with the ever-changing world beyond their ken, their future might be assured. Such high spots need not be as big as Simla but they should be not less beautiful than Loimwe.

Yet the problem remains—who is to build the garden cities of the Age of Peace—and pay for them ? No revenue derived from the hill tribes could pay for them. For several years, at least, the standard of living for the tribes must be low and those few cheap western goods, including kerosene oil and lamps, tinned milk and such like minor luxuries, which during the last few decades have penetrated almost throughout the hills will not be seen for time. The hillmen are not hoarders, hence silver, which can no longer be exchanged for goods, may become almost valueless, and a box of matches represent wealth, although a certain amount of silver will be used for ornaments.

The tribesmen may cease to visit the few bazaars on the plains they used to flock to in the cold weather, for the—bazaars are empty. Nor will they seek work on the plains when with the proceeds they can no longer buy those small—luxuries to which they had grown accustomed, especially clothing. Under the circumstances one must expect them to, hold aloof, to withdraw more into themselves, to break off contact with the plains until better

times return.

The fact that some of the tribes might object to an administration which to them would be not less alien than is British administration to Indians, need not be taken too seriously. So long as the Indian Government did not interfere with them unduly, they would fare well enough. If China, Burma and Bhutan or Tibet were to take over the tribes on their frontiers, and administer them reasonably well, there should be even less dissatisfaction.

But it is an unfortunate fact that one's relations have a trick of oppressing and irritating one in a way no friend would ever dare do. Hence the implacable feud between Kachins and their Burmese cousins. Karens and Burmese. Lisus and their Chinese cousins, Shans and Chinese, and so on. Even the scattered Tai communities, now disjointed, once upon a time united—even these, with a common history and culture, cannot unite—though the next 20 years may see a big change here.

It is all very well to talk of preserving the tribal culture as a sort of museum piece, but it is not realistic. The tribes will have to move with the rest of the world, if more slowly. (But perhaps the rest of the world does not move after all, unless in a circle). By all means let us preserve the fundamental basis of tribal organization, so far as we can, if it will help the tribes to survive ; but in the modern world, with planes whirling overhead, like autumn leaves before the storm, the tribes themselves are not going to be denied a peep into the present. The main object of any outside administration of the backward peoples should be to act as a buffer, to soften the impact of the age of metal on the age of wood. The winds of change must blow through the hills as over the plains, perhaps with greater violence : what is essential is, if possible, to avoid a cyclone.

But this is speculation ; for until the political future of the backward peoples is decided—which in practice means until the future of India and Burma, and may be of China too—is decided, no long-term solution of the tribal areas problem is possible.

THE ABORIGINES OF CHOTA NAGPUR

THEIR PROPER STATUS IN THE REFORMED CONSTITUTION

(*Written in 1936*)

BY THE LATE SARAT CHANDRA ROY

I

INTRODUCTION

FOUR areas in the province of Bihar and Orissa were classed as 'Backward Tracts' under the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919. These are Angul, the Santal Parganas, Sambalpur and Chota Nagpur.

As the respective social and political history and culture of these four tracts have been different, their respective administrative treatment has so long been correspondingly different.

Angul, which formerly formed part of the tributary State of Baud, was, in 1847, confiscated from that State by the British Government, to check the truculence and barbarities of the *meriah* human-sacrificers of the wild Khond tribe. It has hitherto been administered in an unusually simple and patriarchal way under Regulation IV of 1904 and has so long remained outside the general administration of the province.

The Santal Parganas, the home of the agricultural Santals, and the much more primitive Sauria Paharias has, ever since 1855, been administered under special Regulations. But being 'less backward' than Angul, this district has, since 1920, been allowed representation in the legislatures.

Sambalpur, after undergoing many administrative vicissitudes (native chief's rule) was taken over by the British Government and joined on to Chota Nagpur as part of the South Western Frontier Agency in 1849, then transferred to Orissa in 1860, then to the Central Provinces in 1862, then to Bengal in 1905, and finally back again to Orissa in 1912; but so long it has practically had the same administrative system as Chota Nagpur.

Chota Nagpur, or rather the present district of Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Palamau, since their occupation by the British in the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century, down to the year 1831, was administered as an 'ordinary' Regulation District, under the Judge-Magistrate-Collector of Ramgarh who had his headquarters alternately at Chatra in the Hazaribagh district and Sherghatti in the present Gaya district. Situated at a great distance from the headquarters of this unwieldy district, the Chota Nagpur aborigines had, in those days, little means of redress against aggressions on their landed rights that were then the order of the day. Only occasionally the Nazir of the Ramgarh Court, we are told, was deputed, with extraordinary powers to inspect and report on the administration. This afforded little protection or relief to the aborigines. As Sir William Hunter writes, 'they were neglected by their new masters, oppressed by aliens, and deprived of the means which they had formerly possessed of obtaining

redress through their chief. The Kol Insurrection (of 1831) was the bursting of a flame that had been long smouldering.' (*Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XVI, p. 450).

It was then that the necessity for the special protection of the legitimate interests of the Chota Nagpur aborigines was first realised and the whole of Chota Nagpur, including Singhbhum and Manbhum districts, was formed into a separate administrative unit which came to be administered by a special officer designated the Agent to the Governor-General. The Agent was stationed at what is now Ranchi; and his 'Principal Assistants' were stationed at different district headquarters. In place of the older elaborate legal codes, a simple set of rules was promulgated for the guidance of the courts. This checked to some extent the expropriation of aboriginal landholders which had been rampant until then.

But unfortunately the protection afforded by this new system was prematurely withdrawn only after two decades, and Chota Nagpur was again thrown back into the general system of administration and legislation before the aborigines had sufficiently advanced in literacy and civilisation so as to be able to maintain their rights. Although the Chota Nagpur districts now came to be designated 'Non-Regulation Districts', and afterwards 'Scheduled Districts' all the general Acts of the Central and Provincial Legislatures came one after another, to be extended to the Division; and thus it has so long been administered, to all intents and purposes, as ordinary Regulation Districts, and been subject to the same laws, the same High Court, and same classes of subordinate Courts and Revenue authorities as the most advanced districts of the Province. Except the passing of an inadequate Tenancy Act (Bengal Act I of 1879) and a special Tenures Act (Bengal Act II of 1869) no effective steps appear to have been taken to safeguard the special interests of the aborigines; and, what with the absence of such measures and what with the ignorance and the apathy of local officers, the aboriginal landholders and tenantry suffered during this period incalculable losses through the aggressions, fraud and force of powerful spoliators. Government took no effective steps to protect what little was left to them until they were rudely awakened to a realisation of the situation through what is known as the Birsaite revolt of 1899.

II

LACK OF A CONSTRUCTIVE POLICY

It was then that Survey and Settlement operations were taken in hand to protect from further spoliation such remnants of the former extensive land of aboriginal tenants as still survived. And the effect was magical. The aborigines were thoroughly pacified, and they forthwith directed their energies whole-heartedly to emulating the more advanced races in social, economic and educational betterment.

In the Quinquennial Report of the Administration of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (1903-08) we read, 'through the ignorance of the courts aided by the apathy of the local officers, until more recent years, immense injustice has been done to the Mundas by the agency of the law. The feeling created in the minds of many of them was one of great bitterness against the Government, whose failure to interfere on their behalf they had not been able to understand.'

Ever since the Survey and Settlement operations, which commenced in 1902, secured to them such rights in land as were still left to them, and an improved (though still defective) Tenancy Law was enacted in 1908, the aborigines of Chota Nagpur have peaceably settled down, and their leaders have turned their attention to the economic, social and political well-being of their people. The result so far attained is indeed remarkable.

Though they had already lost and suffered much, yet having now become secure in the possession of what was still left, they became reconciled to their lot, and have since readily adapted themselves to the new conditions. Indeed there has been a reorientation of their ideas and aspirations in conformity with those of the general population of the province.

The Government of India Act, 1919, vested the Governor General and the Governor, in respect of what was called the 'Backward Tracts' with powers under section 52A, to withdraw the operation of any Act, in whole or in part, from such areas, and also under section 71 to frame Regulations for them, if necessary. But, so far as Chota Nagpur is concerned, section 71 was never extended to it. As the Bihar and Orissa Government Memorandum on the Backward Tract prepared for the Statutory Commission (1928) says at para 33. 'The position of the five Chota Nagpur Districts is different (from the other "Backward Tracts") in that there is no power in those districts to legislate by Regulation.'

Apart from the small protective power of the Governor General and the Governor under Section 52A of the Government of India Act, 1919, Chota Nagpur districts have hitherto remained, to all intents and purposes, on the same constitutional footing as the most 'advanced' districts of the province. Within the last fifteen years, it was found necessary to exercise the Governor's protective power under Sec. 52A only in one single instance by withholding the operation of one single section of one single Act. And even this restriction (as to election of chairmen of District Boards) has since been withdrawn from one of the districts concerned and is expected to be soon withdrawn from the remaining districts as well.

In fact, so far as Chota Nagpur is concerned, the safeguards of Section 52A would appear to have come too late to be of much practical use, for it was introduced after what may be called the tragic era of exploitation in the history of aboriginal Chota

Nagpur had passed away. Naturally therefore it has now fallen into practical disuse. Governors and some local officials have been generally sympathetic 'in fact more so than the generality of their fellow-countrymen, towards the aborigines and in spite of adverse political pressure, the interests of the aborigines have often not been altogether ignored. But it cannot be said that beyond a partial protective policy, the Government have so far systematically pursued or even definitely formulated any constructive policy of social, economic and political advancement for the aborigines of Chota Nagpur.

It was naturally expected by many that, in the new Constitutional Reforms, Chota Nagpur which is the most advanced among the so-called 'Backward Tracts' of the older Act would be placed on an equal legal status with the rest of the province, with, of course, essential safeguards for the protection of the special interests of the aborigines including their economic and cultural development.

Left generally to adapt themselves to the changing circumstances, as best as they could, though they have in the past lost and suffered much, they have now found their feet, and though some measure of protection is still needed, they no longer stand in need of statutory leading-strings.

But the new Reforms Bill disappointed their expectations, as instead of improving their political status, it has, by its Sixth Schedule lumped together Chota Nagpur and Sambalpur with the Santal Parganas and even with Angul as 'Partially Excluded Areas' in ruthless disregard of the respective administrative history, educational progress and existing legal status of these different areas. Even the free right of discussion and interpellation in the Legislative Council in respect of the administration of aboriginal areas is proposed to be taken away from their representatives in Council.

III

OFFICIAL OBJECTIONS

On the 18th February 1935, the Bihar Legislative Council passed, without division, a resolution moved by the only elected aboriginal member of the Council recommending Government to 'take steps to see that no part of Chota Nagpur is made an Excluded or Partially Excluded Area.' That resolution left the way open for the aborigines to be treated as a minority community for the safeguarding of their legitimate interests. But in the course of the debate on the resolution, the Hon. Mr Hubback, on behalf of Government, not only opposed the resolution, but went further, and, contrary to all expectations, declared that so far as the aborigines of the Chota Nagpur are concerned, although they constitute only 40 per cent. of the population of Chota Nagpur and about 13 per cent. of the entire population of the province of Bihar and form an important minority, they could not be treated

like other recognized minority communities. The reasons which he put forward for this attitude of the Bihar Government were the following :—

- (1) that they had not attained the same standard of civilisation as the other minorities nor are they their equals in wealth and position ;
- (2) that the literacy test showed that they had yet to make considerable leeway to reach the general standard ;
- (3) that they were not as strongly organised politically as other communities ;
- (4) that it was essential that peace and good government should be maintained in their country.

IV

THE ABORIGINAL STANDARD OF CULTURE

I shall now attempt to discuss briefly each of these points, one after another, to the best of my lights. As the question relates to the aborigines of the Chota Nagpur division, I shall confine my remarks only to that Division.

As for the argument that the Chota Nagpur aborigines have not reached the same standard of literacy as the other minorities in the Province, it cannot at any rate, be contended that they are inferior in literacy to either the Depressed Classes or Labour which are among the recognised minorities, As for the other recognised minorities, although their standard of culture may be higher, they too differ as between themselves in their respective standards. And as for the principal aboriginal tribes of Chota Nagpur—the Mundas, Oraons, Kharias, Santals, Hos and Bhumijes—they too possess a culture of their own which is not insignificant or of a mean order.

They were admittedly reclaimers of land and founders of villages in Chota Nagpur. They have for ages possessed an effective form of village self-government with village headmen and their assistants, and councils of village elders discharging judicial and executive functions, and a village militia of unmarried young men. They advanced further in local self-government, and developed a wider organization known as Parhas or Pira which are federations of villages, with their federal executive and judicial councils known as Parha Panchayats. They even went further and organized wider confederations or inter-parha leagues which contained the germs of a State, but whose further development came to be arrested under adverse circumstances. Although, within the last hundred years or so these organizations have been weakened through the inevitable loss of much of their older functions and powers, the outer form and some of the social and even judicial functions of the older organizations still survive ; and the stranger in Chota Nagpur is startled to find some aboriginal villages in the Ranchi District denominated as Raja, Dewan,

Pandey, Kotwar, and so forth, as reminiscences of a glorious past. The Munda tribes still cherish traditions of their former rule originally in the river valleys of the plains below and finally, in the hills and plateaus of Chota Nagpur. As every student of Indian sociology and anthropology is aware, these aborigines have in the past contributed more or less, not only to the racial make-up of the Bengalis, Beharis and Oriyas, but also to the social, religious and cultural equipment of these peoples.

Turning from the past to the present, we find that the present generation of aborigines are building anew on those old foundations, and their sabhas, co-operative societies, and other organizations, social, educational and economic, planned on a very wide scale, testify to their power of organization and discipline.

As for literature, though the Chota Nagpur aborigines have no written literature of their own, at least at the present day many of their songs have a high poetic quality, and their exquisite but simple poetic imagery sometimes puts one in mind of such poets of the civilized West as Robert Burns.

Thanks mainly to the efforts of the Christian Missions working amongst them for nearly a century now and also Government aid in matters of education, a section of them have profited much by English education and a few have even received education in Europe and America. A number of them have received good University education in India. Some are holding responsible posts in the provincial and subordinate services of Government, some are in the liberal professions, and many are now employed in different responsible positions in life in this province and outside it. Improvement societies and sabhas have been established amongst them, and more than one periodical is published by them. Within the last thirty years in particular, there has been, on the whole, a marked improvement in their general level of culture. Their old racial improvidence has, in many instances, given place to a spirit of thrift and mutual self-help and co-operation. An increasing number of their educated men have turned their attention and effort to racial self-development. Their sabhas discuss and form opinion on social, economic and even political questions with a view to promote the welfare of their people, and propagate their opinions, and ideas by lectures and talks and thereby seek to form public opinion in the community so as to facilitate social reform and economic and political betterment. The Hon. Mr Hubback himself referred to the resolutions passed at recent meetings of their associations or sabhas as of importance. A strong deputation of aborigines gave evidence before the Statutory Commission in 1928.

In fact, through the influence mostly of the Christian Missions and, to some extent, Government managed and Government aided educational institutions, the intellectual and social advancement of the aborigines of Chota Nagpur has received a

tremendous impetus within the last fifty years. And even from before that, the aborigines have constituted the most important community in Chota Nagpur, not only politically but socially. Aboriginal village headmen and Parha headmen still wield an amount of influence not only over their own people but also in some respects, over their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. Some of them are owners of villages and almost all of them have landed properties, in some cases considerable. Some engage in trade, and a few are even bankers. As for wealth and position, there are numerous aboriginal tenure holders and owners of villages and groups of villages whose position is very high indeed; some have even been known to lend large sums of money (in a few cases several thousands of rupees) to big landlords in need. Their social position in their areas is quite high indeed. Thus their stake in their country is not inconsiderable. Nor can it be said that they are without culture or civilization.

In intellectual capacity, they are hardly inferior to the more advanced communities of this province or of any other province. It is only lack of adequate opportunities of development and absence of sufficient contact with other civilizations, for which a large portion of them are now fit, that had long kept them backward. In so far as facilities have been extended to them, they have proved their capacity to profit adequately thereby.

As for the second ground taken by the Hon'ble Mr Hubback, namely that they are far behind other communities in literacy particularly literacy in English, available Government statistics do not appear fully to support the propositions. At any rate, the percentage of literacy in the Chota Nagpur Division does not appear to be far behind the most advanced Divisions of the Province. No argument can be based on provincial figures for literacy for particular tribes a considerable section of whom live in the Feudatory States of Orissa where literacy is the lowest in the Province and almost absent among the tribes. We are concerned with Chota Nagpur figures as a whole, and compare them with the figures for the other Divisions of the Province.

The only justification, for including any tract among 'Partially Excluded' areas and denying it the full rights of an advanced area, as the Hon. Mr Hubback, in his speech in Council on the resolution regarding the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report, said, on the 16th of January last, is its backwardness in literacy and particularly literacy in English. Judged by this test which the Hon. Mr Hubback declared to be the 'absolute and conclusive test' of 'backwardness' or advancement of a district or division, and by which its political status or legal position in the forthcoming reformed constitution is expected to be determined, it will be found the Chota Nagpur is no longer among that large proportion of 'backward' tracts which are below the standard of literacy of the rest of the province.

Far from lagging behind the other Divisions of the Province, Chota Nagpur has within a short time forged far ahead so that she now actually stands in the front rank in this province in general literacy as well as in literacy in English.

The latest census figures conclusively prove this. Those figures show that in general literacy Chota Nagpur now comes up almost to the level of South Bihar, whereas in English literacy the Chota Nagpur Division now surpasses the other Divisions of Bihar.

Out of every ten thousand of population the figures for those who passed the Middle or some higher standard of education, are in North Bihar 65 males and 3 females; in South Bihar 96 males and 6 females, and in the Chota Nagpur Division 90.8 males and 8.4 females. The total number of such literate persons including both males as well as females, is 42 in North Bihar, 51 in South Bihar, and 50.8 in the Chota Nagpur Division. As for English literacy out of every ten thousand persons aged 5 to 20, there are in North Bihar 70 males and 4 females, in South Bihar 119 males and 11 females, whereas for the Chota Nagpur division, the figures are as high as 120.6 males and 15.2 females. And, as far as English literacy among adults of 20 and over is concerned, whereas in North Bihar it is only 85 males and 4 females, in South Bihar it is 140 males and 11 females, in the Chota Nagpur Division it is as much as 152.6 males and 16.6 females.

Thus in consideration of their literacy in the principal vernacular of the province and also literacy in English, which the Hon. Mr Hubback rightly declared to be the promotion test for advancement from the class of 'Backward' to the next higher grade of 'Advanced' Chota Nagpur would appear rightly to deserve promotion; and the aborigines of Chota Nagpur deserve to be treated fully as a statutory minority community.

It will be seen that judged by what the Hon. Mr Hubback laid down as 'the absolute and conclusive test' of backwardness Chota Nagpur, or, at any rate, the Ranchi district, whatever, its past history may have been, can no longer be classed among the essentially 'Backward Tracts' of the Province.

In the face of the phenomenal progress in education and civilisation which Chota Nagpur has made within recent years, the degradation of Chota Nagpur to the position of a 'Partially Excluded Area' on a level with Angul or even the Santal Parganas would be naturally regarded by the aboriginal leaders, at any rate, the more go-ahead amongst them, as an injustice and an affront to the racial self-respect of their people. The aboriginal member of the Bihar Council who moved the resolution laid particular stress upon this point.

The grievances of the aborigines on this score may perhaps be regarded as more or less sentimental. But even if it is so, sentiment has always played an important role in human affairs, and the more so among the less sophisticated tribes. Statesmen and

constitution-makers cannot afford altogether to neglect such objections as mere sentimental twaddle. Sentiment cannot be sneered out of existence. Its potentialities for good or for evil cannot be safely ignored.

With the recent rapid growth or rather revival of race-consciousness, racial pride, and even political consciousness and a feeling of independence among the educated aborigines, it is no wonder that the thought of being classed as a 'Backward' or 'Protected' inferior community should now produce a sense of humiliation and irritation, if not in all aboriginal leaders, at least in the more ardent spirits amongst them.

Thus, the Rev. Joel Lakra, the leader of the aboriginal population to the Statutory Commission in 1928, in answer to a question from Sir Hari Sing Gour, objected to his community being dubbed 'Backward' as it is calculated, he said to 'stop the wave of self-respect and independence' that might be developing.

Again, another aboriginal leader, Mr D. N. Samanta, while speaking in the Bihar Legislative Council on the 21st August 1928, on the Government Resolution regarding the constitution of a Committee to co-operate with the Simon Commission, expressed the same feeling in rather extravagant language when he said in a huff, 'We aborigines have fully realised that Government falsely takes up the plea occasionally of protecting the interest of the aborigines, in matters of urgency with a sole view to serve their own ends.' If this was not a mere petulant expression of disappointment, Mr Samanta must have been grievously mistaken. I am inclined, however, to interpret this reckless over-statement on his part as the language of irritation—a bitter note of protest against the inferiority complex produced in his people by being classed as a 'Backward' race to be always 'fathered and mothered' by a paternal Government.

Even such a sober-minded and wise friend of the aborigines as the late Bishop Van Hoeck of Ranchi laid special stress on the need for avoiding hurt to the self-respect of the aborigines. In his deposition before the Simon Commission, in reply to a question as to whether he 'would insist on more safeguards or whether he would like the area to be put under a separate administration' he told the Commission,—'I should certainly prefer the latter course, because if there are special protections for you, it does not certainly encourage you to self-respect because you are constantly made to feel that you are inferior to others. If you are independent, then no longer that protection is needed.' He further said 'in devising that machinery (a suitable machinery for the administration of Chota Nagpur) this should be kept in mind namely, that their self-respect should be maintained. He should not be made to think constantly, 'I am an inferior and therefore, I must not bother about it.'

Now when the Chota Nagpuris find that they are going to be

lumped together in the same political class not only with the 'Regulation-governed' Santal Parganas but even with the hitherto 'Excluded' Angul, it is no wonder that they should regard it as an unmerited political degradation and a humiliation. And their sense of injustice and humiliation may naturally be aggravated by the fact that the Depressed Classes who, so far as Chota Nagpur is concerned, are actually village-servants and village-drudges 'hewers of wood' though not allowed to be 'drawers of water' even by the aborigines—have been recognised as a statutory minority community entitled to a larger representation in the provincial legislature and some representation in the Federal Legislature, whereas their own memorials for increased representation in the provincial councils and some representation in the Federal Legislature have been ignored.

V

POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF ABORIGINES

As for the Hon. Mr Hubback's third point, namely, that the aborigines are not strongly organized, it may be pointed out that whereas the Depressed Classes and Labour in India are yet hardly capable of political organisation without outside help and guidance the aborigines of Chota Nagpur have considerable powers of organisation and combined action in matters which interest them. Thus at page 16 of the Bihar and Orissa Government Memorandum on the Backward Tracts, prepared for the Simon Commission, we are told that in the South Manbhum, Ranchi, and Singhbhum constituencies the aboriginals are 'able to make sure that a candidate who will support their interest is returned.' And these, we find are the only constituencies where the percentage of aboriginal electors to the total number of electors is over 50 per cent., namely 52 in South Manbhum, 63 in Singhbhum and 66 in Ranchi. In the other constituencies where the proportion of electors is so low as 18 in Hazaribagh, 20 in Palamau, and 29½ in North Manbhum, the result could not have been otherwise than it has been. With the extension of the franchise under the new Constitutional Reforms it can be reasonably expected that the aborigines of those parts also will succeed in returning their nominees. Referring to the success of the Ranchi aborigines in returning 12 aboriginal members out of 24 elected members, the same memorandum says at p. 17: 'This result has been largely due to the organization, among the Oraons and Mundas for the betterment of their position, of a society called the Unnati Samaj brought into being by a few educated aboriginals.' Thus want of political organisation can no longer be imputed to them.

The proportion of aboriginal voters who go to the polling-stations in Ranchi and Singhbhum districts in elections for both the legislatures and local bodies compare favourably with the proportion in most other advanced communities and districts.

Thus it cannot be said that the aborigines are not fairly strongly organized either socially or politically.

The fourth and last ground urged is the necessity of securing 'peace and good government' in the aboriginal areas. It cannot be gainsaid that the aborigines of Chota Nagpur are now a peaceful and law-abiding people. The disturbances which from time to time occurred in Chota Nagpur in the last century were due, as we have seen not to any inborn turbulence or criminal propensities on the part of the aborigines, but occurred as a reaction to the unjust aggressions on their ancient landed rights against which courts and officials gave them little relief in the past. As soon, however, as the Survey and Settlement operations secured for them such rights in land as were still left to them, the aborigines of Chota Nagpur, as a race, peaceably applied themselves to the betterment of their economic, social and intellectual condition. And remarkable are the results they have since achieved.

Naturally, therefore, the more enlightened among the Chota Nagpur aboriginals cannot be blamed if they resent the idea of being still treated as a 'backward' community with regard to whom the Governor's responsibility is declared to be only 'the security of peace and good government' section 52 Cl. (e).

The implication of this formula is generally believed to be that the communities for whom it is meant are still composed mostly of untamed savages characterized by inveterate turbulence and innate anti-social and law breaking propensities which require to be constantly curbed and controlled. Whatever acts of reprisal and occasional violence might have been committed by a few misguided coteries of Chota Nagpur aborigines in the last century on being goaded to desperation by repeated wrongs which the authorities did little to redress, they have, since the beginning of the present century, quietly settled down as peaceful tenants solely intent upon improving their economic social and intellectual condition. They have ever since been living in peace and harmony with their neighbours and in dutiful submission to the authorities. Though it cannot be denied that the uneducated masses amongst them are still at times more or less easily excitable, their loyalty to Government is unquestioned, and so, too, the remarkable progress they have since made in education and civilization.

Perhaps the hypnotic suggestion of the inappropriate term 'primitive' sometimes loosely applied to them, is responsible for the illusion that the Chota Nagpur aborigines are still savages who should be regarded as a standing menace to 'peace and good government.' Peace and good government is certainly as essential for Chota Nagpur as for any other country. Exceptional precautions for maintaining the same in Chota Nagpur in particular appear to be rarely called for in these days. The responsibility of the Governor and the Governor-general for the 'protection of their legitimate interests' as a racial minority might

appear to suffice for the purpose.

The Hon. Mr Hubback has, however, given another interpretation of the formula 'peace and good Government' and argued that there are superior advantages for the aborigines in being treated as belonging to 'Partially Excluded Areas' than as a Minority Community. He told us in Council that the maintenance of 'peace and good government' would involve positive action for the betterment of the population of 'Partially Excluded Areas' whereas, 'Protection of legitimate interests contemplates only negative action in resisting infringement' of such interests of minorities, and that in a 'Partially Excluded Area the special problems of the aborigines might receive better attention.'

VI

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Now the special problems of the aborigines which require attention and their special interests which require protection consist mainly of their agrarian rights and special tenancy rights which require to be safeguarded by a well-considered tenancy law; secondly their economic welfare which require to be promoted by amongst other things, an equitable law against usury, and wider employment of their people in the public services; thirdly, the promotion of their education and culture by maintaining suitable institutions and making special money grants where required; and fourthly, the promotion of temperance amongst them by suitable measures; and, generally the proper administration of their areas by carefully selecting for the aboriginal areas specially qualified and sympathetic officers conversant with their languages and customs. All these interests, I venture to think, can be safeguarded and promoted by the Governor under his special responsibilities for minority communities under clauses 12 (1) (c), 52 and 83(3) of the new Bill as efficiently as under his special responsibilities for 'Partially Excluded Areas.' And the safeguarding of these interests involves not only negative action but also positive action for their betterment, such as promotion of their special culture, and their due representation in the public services which are specifically mentioned in the Instrument of Instructions (and in para 321 of the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report.)

The Hon. Mr Hubback pointed out that under clause 80 (1) of the new Bill the Governor will have the power to certify expenditure in respect of any head of account where the vote of the legislature would, in his opinion, affect the discharge of any of his special responsibilities, and therefore its advantages for Chota Nagpur assuming that that Division is a partially excluded area are obvious. But as this power is to be exercised in the due discharge of any of his special responsibilities, it can, I venture to think, be exercised on the interests of the aborigines as a minority

community as much as if they belonged to a 'Partially Excluded Area.'

Thus, the supposed superior advantages of the 'Partial Exclusion' scheme over the 'Minority' scheme are not clear or manifest to us. In any case, there appears to be no valid argument against the recognition of the aborigines as a minority community entitled to the benefit of the minority clauses of the new Government of India Bill. And if this is assured to the Chota Nagpur aborigines, and they are spared the opprobrious name of 'Partially Excluded,' any further and additional provisions really calculated to result in their economic and educational betterment, will certainly not be unwelcome.

As for the objectionable designation of 'Partially Excluded Area' the Hon'ble Mr Hubback himself admitted in his speech that it implies 'a slight on their feelings.' It is therefore only just and proper that this designation should not be applied to Chota Nagpur. The designation 'Aboriginal Area' or 'Aboriginal Tract' might be more appropriate for Chota Nagpur and free from objection, for it is the aborigines who, though a minority, still form and should form the dominant factor in the administrative policy of these tracts.

The Partially Excluded Area provisions will certainly mean an improvement in the status of Angul; and in the case of the Santal Parganas, the effect of the new Bill (Schedule VI) may be more or less to maintain the status quo, except in so far as the unfettered right of interpellation and discussion in Council will be lost. But so far as Chota Nagpur is concerned, we are unable to discover any element of advance in the 'Partial Exclusion' provisions. On the contrary many aboriginal leaders like the Munda mover of the resolution for the removal of Chota Nagpur from the category of 'Partially Excluded Areas' feel that these provisions spell retrogression—a degradation of their political status. They complain that whereas the dominant feature of these provisions are exclusion and restrictions and not enlargement of rights, the main feature of the minority provisions is protection and reservation of their rights and promotion of their welfare, and this is all that they desire and require. They feel that whereas their treatment as a 'Partially Excluded Area' would hurt their growing racial selfrespect, the minority provision of the Bill practically provide the same safeguards as those provided for 'Partially Excluded Areas' in the new Bill, and thus would safeguard their special interests to a large extent. The minority provisions would further spare them the stigma of inferiority which 'Exclusion' however partial, from the Reforms, would fasten on them. The minority scheme would also appear to have such additional positive advantages as suitable representation in the public services and in the legislatures, promotion of their culture, and the free right of discussion and interpellation regarding the

administration of their areas. Above all, what is particularly required is the selection of specially sympathetic officials to administer these areas.

As I have already stated except for the only protective measure of Section 52A of the Government of India Act of 1919 which authorised the Governor-General to withhold the application of any particular legislative Act or portion of an Act from Chota Nagpur Chota Nagpur has been so long treated on an equal footing with the most advanced divisions of the province. And even this small protective measure has practically fallen into disuse, as with the advance of the aborigines of Chota Nagpur in education and civilisation the need for the application of even this small safeguard has not been felt, except in a small matter some twelve years ago. And since then Chota Nagpur has made much more rapid progress in education and civilisation.

Thus it will be seen that the ground put forward by the Hon. Mr Hubback against the recognition of the aborigines as a minority community in the province do not appear to be tenable any longer.

The two main safeguards provided for 'Partially Excluded Areas' by Section 92 of the new Bill, namely, the Governor's power of veto and modification of an Act in its application to their areas and his Regulation making power, have their counterparts in the minority scheme which vests the Governor with the power to refuse assent to or remand a bill, and Section 90 which enables the Governor to pass a 'Governor's Act' in the discharge of his special responsibilities, of which the protection of the legitimate interests of minorities is one. Section 44 vests a similar power in the Governor-General.

In these circumstances, it would appear that the balance of advantages is in favour of the 'Minority Scheme' for the aborigines of Chota Nagpur, supplemented by their more adequate representation in the legislatures, and such additional provisions for the promotion of their cultural and economic interests as may be found suitable and necessary.

A suitable increase in the representation of the aborigines in the provincial legislatures and some representation in the Federal Assembly, would undoubtedly serve as additional safeguards which will facilitate the due consideration and protection of the legitimate interests of the aborigines. In spite of all our professions of sympathy for the aborigines, it must be confessed to our great shame that when there is a clash of interests, the aborigines receive scant sympathy from their countrymen and have still to depend on their own strength aided by the active sympathy and help of Government.

VII

THE BACKWARD ARE BACKWARD NO MORE

The aborigines of Chota Nagpur as we have seen, have within

the last thirty years and more made up much of their past arrears in education, and are forging ahead as fast as means and opportunities permit. What is now really and urgently required is to widen their opportunities.

To include Chota Nagpur now in the same category with Angul would be to set back the hands of the clock for Chota Nagpur and take her back almost to the South-Western Frontier Agency period of her history which terminated about a century back in 1854. True, the premature withdrawal of protection in 1854, resulted in the gradual loss of many of the valuable landed rights of the aborigines and led to repeated risings, off and on, through the greater part of the last century, until the belated Survey and Settlement operations which commenced in 1902 and were conducted under the direction of such eminently sympathetic officials as Mr (now H. E. Sir James) Sifton and Messrs. Lister, Reid, Bridge and Gokhale, and Mr (now Sir Stewart) Macpherson. This saved such remnants of their old rights as still survived, and effectively pacified the aborigines. Since then, the aborigines have adapted themselves to their changed conditions economic, administrative, or political, and devoted their energies wholeheartedly to the intellectual, social and economic advancement. And phenomenal indeed is the progress they have since achieved. To seek at this late hour of the day to pay what I may call 'Protection's old arrears' by restoring something like the century old and now obsolete and unsuitable protection of the North-Western Frontier Agency period might look like over-protection (and a glaring constitutional anachronism, so far as Chota Nagpur is concerned.

The fact that while under the existing constitution, all general Acts of the Legislature ipso facto apply to Chota Nagpur unless the Governor in his discretion thinks fit to veto the extension of any of them in part or in whole, to Chota Nagpur, or to extend it with modifications, under the new proposals on the other hand, (Section 92 (1)) 'No Act of Legislature will apply unless the Governor by public notification so directs;' and the further fact that under section 92(2) the Governor may, if he chooses, repeal any legislative enactment and frame and enforce Regulations of his own for Chota Nagpur, and that under section 84 (d) (i) he may disallow discussion or even questions in the Legislative Council regarding or arising out of such action, have induced in some people the panicky dream that the provisions, as they stand, do not exclude the possible danger of administration by Regulation. When one seeks to convince them of the baselessness of such wild apprehensions, and the improbability of such an impasse, they contend that although a wise and sympathetic Governor like His Excellency Sir James Sifton or a likely Governor like the Hon. Mr Hubback or the Hon. Mr Hallet, who know the aborigines well and feel for them, can never think of such an administrative anachronism, or that normally these powers may not be exer-

cised by any Governor all this to their mind, does not alter the fact that such provisions in the Statute book, do, at any rate, mean a lowering of the constitutional status of Chota Nagpur and constitute, at best a double-edged sword.

When the White Paper was published, the attention of the aborigines and their friends was particularly attracted to the galling injustice of its clause 100 which empowered the Governor to disallow, at his discretion, any Resolution or question in Council, regarding the administration of a 'Partially Excluded Area' or a 'Wholly Excluded Area.' At that time they thought, and so did I, that the safeguards provided by Clause 108, were practically the same as the existing safeguards, and, for want of a better arrangement, might perhaps be helpful a little longer, coupled, of course, with a larger representation of the aborigines in the legislatures than the White Paper recommended.

After the Joint Select Committee's Report was published, the provisions were more carefully examined, and it was found that the restrictions in respect of the 'Partially Excluded Areas' are far more astringent and humiliating than the existing restrictions. Many aboriginal leaders, were further mortified and exasperated at the thought that whereas the rights of even the 'Depressed Classes' and Labour were to be extended theirs were to be restricted. Even the aborigines claim to a larger representation in the provincial legislatures and some representation in the Federal Legislature was denied. We had strongly urged this in the provincial Council; and representations were made about it to their Excellencies the Governor and the Governor-General, to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State and to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister. But all this went unheeded. The present Bill, in its provisions regarding the 'Partially Excluded Areas' is even more retrograde than the Joint Select Committee's Report!

VIII

THE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE ABORIGINES

As the proceedings of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council for the last fifteen years will show, I have always been extremely cautious and conservative in matters relating to the political advance of the aborigines. I have always protested against precipitate haste and counselled timing the steps in their political advance. And I shall still continue to do so, because concern for the welfare of the aborigines has, for the last thirty years and more, been uppermost in my thoughts and heart. But after anxiously weighing with a full sense of responsibility, the advantages and disadvantages of the 'Backward Tract' system and its proposed constitutional correlate 'Partial Exclusion' and the reaction of the proposed political status for them on the racial mind, I have been forced to the conclusion that of the three modes of treating the aborigines of Chota Nagpur in the forthcoming

constitution namely, (1) throwing them into the general constitution without any distinction, (2) treating them like the Santal Parganas and Angul as 'Partially Excluded' from the Reforms, and (3) treating them as an important minority community,—their treatment normally as an important minority community would appear to be the most—desirable and suitable in their present stage of advancement. Whatever additional protective provisions might be necessary and must needs be adopted for exceptional circumstances and contingencies, their normal political status, should, to my humble thinking, be that of an important minority community, for whose protection and uplift the Government should have a special responsibility. So long as they have at the head of their Government such sympathetic officials with intimate knowledge regarding them as H. E. Sir James Sifton, or the Hon. Mr Hubback, or Mr Hallett, their special interest will stand in no danger of being neglected. But administrative leading-strings, which might suit the Khonds of Angul or the Sauria Paharias (Malers) of the Raj Mahal Hills or the Damin-i-Koh, will no longer be consistent with the present educational progress of the Mundas, Oraons and Kharias, Bhumij, Hos and Santals of Chota Nagpur, and 'partial exclusion' under the restrictions laid down in sections 91, 92 and 94 of the new Government of India Bill, instead of enlarging the constitution for them so as to suit their increasing stature, might make it more cribbed, cramped and contracted.

For Chota Nagpur is no longer a 'sleepy hollow,'
'A spot of dull stagnation without light
Or power of movement.'

THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIAN AFFAIRS IN CANADA

BY E. T. D. LAMBERT

1. Canadian Indian Administration is under the exclusive control of the Dominion Government which exercises its jurisdiction through the Indian Affairs Branch, and agency of the Department of Mines and Resources.

2. All law relating to Indians and their administration is incorporated in a single statute, the Indian Act, first passed by the Dominion Parliament in 1876. It is based upon the experience of the old Province of Canada and of the other colonies which were confederated through the British North American Act in 1867.

The Act is itself one of the distinct merits of Canadian Indian Administration. It is a single, systematic body of law, beginning with a precise definition of an Indian. Any change in the Dominion's handling of Indian affairs takes the form of an amendment to this basic statute. The consolidation of all Indian laws in a single chapter contrasts sharply with the practice in the U. S. A. where Indian law is to be found in a vast accumulation of special and general statutes, forming as a whole, a complicated, contradictory and confusing mass difficult to comprehend and to systematize for administrative application. The American system is also more costly to administer.

3. In Canada, an Indian ward is not also a citizen of the country, as he is in the United States. Only by going through the process of enfranchisement, contained in the Indian Act, can an Indian achieve the status of citizenship; and on becoming a citizen, he ceases to be an Indian in every legal respect. He ceases to be a member of his band. All his privileges and restrictions as an Indian are abolished. He no longer can use or hold land protected by the special attributes of Government guardianship. In practice, he gets off the reserve, and he is expected to stay away and out of its affairs; in fact, he is in legal trespass if he returns. The essential criterion of enfranchisement is that the Indian has assumed the manner of living like a White and has demonstrated his capacity of self-support.

4. The principal features of the Indian Act, when viewed in their entirety contain a conception of the Indian's progressive advance from the primitive status in which he exists upon first contact with the Government, to his 'civilization' and ultimate liberation from wardship. Under the Canadian System, three stages of development are visualized in the progress of an Indian group:

(1) The stage of initial Governmental contact where the existing Indian system of organization and accepted leadership is recognized. The land remains in band ownership, individual families being given informal assignments to particular plots. Agricultural activities

are strictly supervised by the Indian agent ; and, in the Western Provinces, band-owned herds of range cattle are grazed on lands held in band title.

- (2) In the second stage, the principles of local self-government are introduced. The reserve is districted and chiefs and councillors are elected for terms of 3 years. The band council is empowered to enact regulations governing the public services of the reserve and to authorize expenditures from band funds, subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council. The distribution of land to families is made through the issuance of 'Location tickets' which, however, do not convey the substance or promise of fee title.
- (3) The final stage is especially governed by Part II of the Indian Act, titled 'Indian Advancement.' The Council is elected annually, and its power to enact ordinances is not subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council. The Act contemplates that the Indian band will operate virtually as a Municipal Corporation.

The Indian Act, therefore, rests upon the assumption that the Government's dealings with Indians should be on the basis of the group rather than the individual—sometimes called 'Indirect Government.' It also visualizes the progress of the Indian as a slow progress, eschewing radical overnight panaceas of forced 'absorption into body politic.' It recognizes that Anglo-Saxon methods of political and group organization must be introduced deliberately, moving from the simpler to the more complex forms. It rests on the belief that the best preparation for citizenship in the country is to be found by practising the obligations of citizenship within the Indian group.

5. It is in regard to Indian land that the Dominion of Canada has shown extraordinary integrity and common sense. Initially less generous than the United States in setting aside areas for Indian Reserves, Canada has, nevertheless exerted a greater measure of good faith in protecting the reserves, once established, from alienation. An important reason for this condition is to be found in the Canadians' aversion to the trust allotment theory which was made the major land policy of the United States in the Dawes Act of 1887. Indian Reserves in Canada are never found to be 'checker boards' of White and Indian-owned lands as on the allotted reservations in the U. S. A. The title to Indian land is in the Crown in trust for the Indian band. The location ticket mentioned in para. 4 can never be alienated to a non-member of the band, though it can be transferred through sale to another member. An individual Indian can secure title to his land only in

conjunction with enfranchisement, but the Council's permission is required. Further, on receiving fee title to his land, the Indian must compensate the band in money for its value, less improvements. In practice, however, enfranchisement means that the Indian leaves the reserve and the policy is followed of rarely permitting an Indian to acquire fee title within the reserve and only on its exterior boundary. The Canadian land system operates, therefore, to preserve the reserves intact—a haven for the groups, and incidentally an effective geographical unit in which the Government may conduct its services and exercise its guardianship.

Another reason for the preservation of Indian reserves in Canada has been the Government's extreme conservatism in authorizing the bands to dispose of supposedly surplus lands through "surrenders." The procedure for the sale of land is controlled by very strict requirements and the consent of the band is always necessary. Although there have been a few cases where the Government exerted coercion in such alienations its record on the whole is one of protecting Indian bands from popular pressures and enticements. The Indian title has been religiously respected, even as against the wishes of other agencies of the Dominion Government.

6. Not the least interesting aspect of Canada's Indian System is the retention of the historic practice of making Indian Treaties. Whereas in the United States, treaty-making was discontinued in 1871, in Canada, Indian treaties are scrupulously respected and upheld and are, in fact, an integral part of Indian administration, being ground into the warp and woof of the Indian Act.

With the exception of British Columbia, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces (not included for certain historic reasons which it is not necessary to mention here) the Dominion is divided into treaty areas. Each area is covered by a separate treaty. Historically, the treaty areas were set up as White settlement pushed westward and northward. Bands which were not signatories to the treaty when it was first negotiated, may come under its terms through subsequent agreement, the process known as an adhesion. The adherence of additional bands to established treaties occurs occasionally in the northern regions of the Dominion.

These treaties generally provide for the acceptance of the sovereignty of the Crown, for the designation of specifically described reserves, for the 'Indians' receipt of certain aids to their civilization—schools, farm implements, etc.,—and for the payment of a small sum, usually \$5, to each member of the band annually. The payment of treaty money every year is scrupulously observed and is occasion for the Indians to renew their expressions of loyalty, accompanied by dignified formality. To the Indians, the payment of the treaty money is a formalized act of the Government by which the Crown renews its promise to adhere to the treaty's terms.

7. Another definitely admirable feature of Canada's handling of Indian affairs relates to band funds accumulated through the sale of lands, timber, minerals or other band assets. The basic principle is generally followed that such funds, if expended, should be invested in new income-producing assets and not squandered in unplanned, worthless per capita payments, as in the long and unhappy history of tribal funds in the United States. In Canada, the bands are encouraged to leave their funds in the Dominion Treasury at interest, and it is possible to point to many band accounts which have steadily increased their capital from year to year. Interest or some portion of the accrued interest, is usually spent on a variety of activities or services on the reserve, with the band Council's consent.

8. In its observance of treaties, its integrity and conservatism, in protecting Indian lands, its superior handling of Indian moneys and in the conceptualism contained in its Indian Act, Canada undoubtedly has a better system than the U. S. A., but the U. S. A. have a better Indian educational system and their dealings with the Indians are not quite so autocratic.

The Canadian Indian educational system is in the hands of missionaries of various denominations who fight amongst themselves.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

In place of the usual *Notes and Queries*, we print this month two extracts from the *Census of India 1931*, which will round off and complete the picture of administrative problems given in this number of *Man in India*. We believe that our readers will find it convenient to have these reprints collected in handy form.

THE EFFECT ON THE TRIBES OF THE NAGA HILL DISTRICT OF CONTACTS WITH CIVILIZATION IN 1931.

THE conditions obtaining throughout the Naga Hills district being fairly uniform, to deal with each tribe separately would entail much unnecessary repetition. I will, therefore note on the district as a whole drawing my examples from the Angami, Sema, Ao, and Lhota Nagas, and the Thado Kukis.

In this area contact with civilization is brought about in two ways—by the visits of tribesmen to the plains lying along the base of the hills, and by the penetration of foreigners into the hills. The latter is by far the most important. Foreigners residing in the hills influence the culture and mode of life of the indigenous inhabitants in numerous ways—by administration, by missionary propaganda, by the innate tendency to imitate foreigners who display a culture in some way regarded as 'higher,' by objects of trade imported from without, by the introduction of disease, by medical work, by communications that make travelling everywhere easy and safe, by the presence of an armed force strong enough to suppress any rising or inter-tribal war, and by countless subtle influences that react on the mentality of the villages, usually to the detriment of their pride in their customs and history.

There has been little or no exploitation of forests, minerals or agricultural land, but the future cannot be held to be secure as long as the ruling of Government stands that *jhum* land, which the owners have bought or inherited as immovable property which can be validly held by an individual or a clan, is all unclassified State forest at the absolute disposal of Government, on which there is no liability to pay compensation in the event of its being taken over.

There is no systematic recruitment of hillmen for work in the plains; gangs, especially of Semas and Aos, go down in the cold weather to work on tea gardens in order to earn cash for their house tax. They come back none the better for the journey. Women do not go down with the men in any large numbers, but when they do go girls are not infrequently lured into a career of prostitution by the prospect of an easy life, being unable to distinguish between the easy going moral code of their own villages and the systematized vice of the plains, with their so-called higher culture. The men are apt to waste money on rubbish they see displayed in the shops, and on distilled liquor for which they acquire a taste. Gangs going year after year to the same garden are paid regularly and well, but those working for petty contractors are cheated of their earnings with regrettable frequency. They cannot bring suits in the plain—the expenses, the distance and the endless adjournments are all against them. When they find that Government is prevented by its own legal methods from settling their claims equitably and quickly their respect for it naturally suffers.

Improved communications, while they have immensely facilitated internal trade, have undoubtedly spread disease. All Nagas assert definitely that since their country was taken over illness has increased. Not only have specific diseases, such as venereal disease and tuberculosis been introduced, but epidemics spread more quickly. In the old days of war and raiding, villages remained more or less constantly segregated. Now-a-days people travel freely everywhere and disease spreads quickly. Tuberculosis is definitely established. So far its spread has been slow, but the time may come when it will become rampant and the Nagas and Kukis of these hills will follow other primitive peoples into oblivion.

The national drink of the hill tribes of Assam is rice beer. Foreigners have brought in distilled liquor, and its effects are evil. The casual labourer working away from his village, himself the product of contact with civilization, has no wife with him to brew his rice beer and buys spirits instead. Later he comes to regard distilled liquor as a necessity. Nagas are fully aware of the evils, and certain Angami Villages have sworn oaths that no member will indulge in it.

Opium is only consumed in certain areas. The Konyak Nagas are inveterate opium addicts, having acquired the habit from plainsmen, with whom they have been in close contact for a very long time. A limited number of Ao Nagas have also taken to the habit. A few years ago a village—founded by the American Baptists Mission as a Christian Village contained more opium addicts than the whole of the rest of the tribe. The reason was that the Mission had forbidden alcoholic liquor and their converts had taken to opium as a substitute. I believe things are much improved now. In the rest of the district there are few addicts except detribalised Nagas living in Kohima bazaar. With them the vice must be directly put down to contact with foreigners.

The opening up of the cart road to Manipur has undoubtedly led to an increase in prostitution. Except to a limited extent among the Eastern Angamis, prostitution, in the sense of women selling themselves for money to all and sundry, is not an indigenous Naga or Kuki custom. In many tribes girls before marriage allow their lovers every privilege, but this is very different from a commercial transaction. Foreigners coming into the hills by the cart road often demand women, and where there is a demand a supply is apt to be forthcoming. Some women even visit the cart stands and offer themselves to the bullock drivers.

While the extension of communications has led to the introduction of much foreign rubbish and cheapjack ware it has also stimulated genuine Naga trade. For example in the old days the supply of ivory armlets was very limited, as they could only be obtained from the very few elephants killed by Nagas themselves. Now Angamis bring large numbers up from Calcutta and trade them through the hills. Similarly, Naga ornaments which are only made in a few places, such as the baldricks made in the Sema village of Seromi, are far more easily distributed. I have no doubt more Naga ornaments are worn now than were worn in the days before the hills were taken over, and for this peace and easy communications are responsible.

Before the hills were taken over the important villages of Khonoma, with sufficient land to support its population, raided far and wide for heads, tribute, loot and prisoners they could hold to ransom. Now they have substituted trade for raiding, and landless men wander right into Burma selling beads. The prestige of the village enables them to keep almost a monopoly of this trade.

I have mentioned above the increase in prostitution due to the cart-road. Far more serious in this respect is the presence in Kohima of a large number of unmarried foreigners, including the unmarried men of a battalion of Assam Rifles, and of Naga subordinates living away from their villages. A population is growing up of persons with no tribe or customary law and religion, and their settlement is a plague spot. Any girl who quarrels with her parents in a Naga village and can bolt to this sink of iniquity can find an old hag ready to take her in and start her without delay on a career which can only end in disease and misery.

Education of the type which is given has been on the whole an evil rather than a good. Some men have withstood its evil influence and have remained good Nagas, with something else very useful added. Not so the majority. Very rarely indeed does a Naga regard education as something which is going to make him more fitted for his ordinary life, he regards it as something which will fit him for a very different life, and he expects that life to be offered to him in the form of a Government post aptly described to

me once as a sitting and eating job. When boys apply to me for scholarships my custom is to ask them what they intend to do when they have finished their education, and the reply almost invariably is 'I hope Government will find me a job.' The result is a surplus of half-educated youths, unwilling to go back to the village life of their fathers and looking in vain for employment which they consider suitable to their talents. The situation is especially bad among the Aos. A few educated Angamis have ventured into commerce usually with disastrous results, borrowing money wildly and expecting that somehow their education will bring them enormous profits.

Foreign dress is spreading slowly, but steadily. For this the blame must fall both on certain departments of Government, who allow their employees to wear it, and on missionaries whose active encouragement has not always as yet been reduced even to connivance. It is certainly definitely connected in the Naga mind with education, and a smattering of superficial knowledge is considered to entitle the possessor thereof to a pair of shorts, while a suit complete with watch-chain and trilby hat almost corresponds to a doctor's robes. The custom is bad from every point of view. It entails waste of money where money is hard to find. It encourages dirt, since no Naga can afford the changes he ought to have in the damp heat of Assam. It spreads disease in two main ways. Adults become more liable to chills and phthisis since they do not change their wet clothes, and children who are against wet shirt waists instead of against their mothers' warm backs suffer as a result. From the artistic point of view it is especially and utterly to be condemned. To substitute soiled and poor quality western clothes, or more often a caricature of them, for the exceedingly picturesque Naga dress is an aesthetic crime. More of the body is covered up, but I have yet to find that this leads to stricter morality.

Nagas, who have taken whole-heartedly to foreign customs often build houses resembling the worst type of 'shack.' A Naga house, as all fittingly built houses should, seems to have grown out of the landscape. The corrugated iron roofs of the 'foreign' houses are blots upon it. They are expensive and stuffy. The fashion has been encouraged I fear by the Baptist chapels, which as artistic productions are execrable, and widely spread as they are, tend to kill the Naga's unconscious but innate sense of architectural fitness.

Only two ancient customs have had to be put down by Government—the sacrifice of mithun by cruel methods, and head-hunting. The suppression of the first is wholly good, and more humane methods of killing can be substituted without detriment to the rites. The suppression of head-hunting, though necessary in any area which is fully administered, has probably not been for the benefit of the tribes. The very fact that, far from being an honour, it is a disgrace to be killed in war, makes all Nagas very careful of their own safety, and their wars were singularly innocuous affairs. In a war between two big villages each side might lose one or two men a year. The number of lives saved by the suppression of the practice is therefore negligible, and is far more than balanced by those lost through the spread of disease made easy by safe travelling everywhere. In addition to this there is a very real loss in virility and keenness. Unbroken peace is no better for Nagas than it is for any other race.

Realising that on the preservation of customs developed exactly to fit the environment and tested by centuries of use depends the whole fabric of tribal society, Government has been at pains to preserve them to the utmost limit possible and to ensure that such change as must inevitably come shall not be destructive in its suddenness. In strong contrast has been the attitude of the American Baptist Mission. As religion plays a part in every Naga ceremony and as that religion is not Christianity, every ceremony must go. Such ceremonies as the great Feasts of Merit, at which the whole village, rich and poor, alike is entertained and of which the religious aspect is far less important than the social, have not been remodelled on Christian lines, but have been utterly abolished among converts. This has been the

fate, too, of all village sacrificial feasts. The place of these is not adequately taken by small parties meeting to drink tea. The suppression among Baptists of the ancient feasts in which all joined is not only a loss to the would be hosts, but to the village as a whole and not least to the poor, who always get their full share of good cheer at Animist festivals. To abolish these feasts is to do away with the very few occasions on which the awful monotony of village life is broken. They are, too, the natural Naga and Kuki way of distributing wealth. I have heard a Baptist teacher boast that his granaries were so full of the store of years that some of the grain was black with age. Had he been an Animist that grain would not have been left to rot uselessly but would have been eaten by his fellow villagers.

To any one, who, unable to reject some of the most hallowed passages in Scripture, regards fermented liquor in moderation as not only harmless but beneficial, the strong prohibition policy of the Mission cannot but seem a grave mistake. Few of its advocates attempt to justify it from Scripture. They use the arguments which brought the Volstead Act into being. Such an obsession has abstention from fermented drink become among converts that teetotalism is often regarded as the outstanding mark of a Christian. Among the Aos 'teetotaler' and 'Christian' are used as synonymous terms in ordinary conversation. The substitution of opium for rice beer is probably rare among Christians now, but as in America, secret drinking goes on, with results that are morally evil.

It is at the big feasts that singing and dancing are indulged in and full dress worn. These have been entirely suppressed among the Ao, Lhota and Sema Christians, the men of whom wear no ornaments at all, having stripped their beads from the necks, their ivory armlets from their arms and even the cotton wool from their ears. The women are more conservative and still often wear their beads, though I doubt if a girl would actually wear her ornaments at a Mission school. Angami men too are difficult to dislodge from their ancient ways. The best of them do not give up their picturesque dress and are quite ready to put on all their finery and take part in the ceremonial singing parties which are such a feature of their village life.

Of the material arts in these hills, wood-carving is the chief. It is displayed on the houses of those who have given the great Feasts of Merit, on the *Morung* posts of the Aos, Konyaks and Lhotas, and on the big xylophones of the Aos. This is doomed to extinction as the power of the mission increases. Feasts of Merit are forbidden among them, and no attempt is made to induce rich Christians to decorate their houses in the old way. No Christian boy is allowed to spend time in the *Morung* and they are not built any more in such villages. In such villages, too, the old xylophones can be seen rotting in the jungles.

The suppression of the wearing of all ornaments or tribal finery, of dancing, of singing (except hymns) of village feasts and of all artistic outlet is spreading an unspeakable drabness over village life. Old songs and old traditions are being rapidly forgotten. Told year in and year out that all the past history, all the strivings, all the old customs of his tribe are wholly evil, the Naga tends to despise his own race, and no night of the soul is blacker than that.

The suppression of the *Morung* in which the young Animists learn to be useful citizens is unwarranted by any good reason that I have ever heard. It is part of the tendency to abolish old things just because they are old, and substitute for the strong communal life of the tribes an individualism as enabled the tribes to survive for so long an individualism foreign to them. Not only is this individualism wrapped up with the strong emphasis on personal salvation, it is also the direct and natural reaction against the destruction of all the old things that mattered in village life and all the old expressions of the artistic and social genius of the tribes. My tribe has erred hopelessly, says the convert. All through the centuries it has tried to work out its destiny. I will work out mine, and mine alone. An animist puts his village before himself. A Baptist puts himself before his village. No Semas are as prone

to disobey their Chiefs as Christian Semas, and Christian Aos have often refused to take the part in village government to which their years and experience called them. A civilized Naga is apt to call customary discipline restraint, and many of them are eager to leave their village and live free of all control.

Times are changing and new influences and tendencies are appearing. Tribes and villages acting as units will be able to judge of them and resist them if need be. Individuals will find them too strong. Will the time come when these hills will be inhabited by scattered families, without pride in the past or hope for the future, without arts and without recreation, dressed in nondescript garments as drab as their lives, and busy only to win from the steep, rocky slopes enough sustenance to enable them to beget children and die?

Julian Huxley in one of his articles which he quotes in the introduction to his book *Africa View* sums up the exactly similar problem 'of that continent as follows:—

'On the top of all this variety of nature and man there impinge western civilization and western industrialism. Will their impact level down the variety, reducing the proud diversity of native tribes and races to a muddy mixture, their various cultures to a single inferior copy of our own? Or shall we be able to preserve the savour of difference, to fuse our culture and theirs into an autochthonous civilization, to use local difference as the basis for a natural diversity of development?'

J. P. MILLS, *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part III B, pp. 147 ff.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS IN 1931

The total figure of primitive tribes in India may be taken as 25,000,000 in round numbers of which about 20,000,000 are in British India of whom again 2,500,000 are found in Burma, for there are in Burma number of hill tribes who were only partially enumerated at the census. It has already been indicated that their position in surroundings of a more developed culture presents certain problems of administration. As long as a primitive tribe remains in isolation conducting its own affairs—according to its own law and customs it presents no problem except that required to prevent ding or other forms of aggression on more civilised or less warlike neighbours. For this purpose a military occupation of territory may be necessary and a loose system of political control or administration of some sort which need not involve more than a minimum of interference with tribal customs and the expense of which, if greater as it normally will be, than any revenue yielded by such an area, is in the nature of insurance. Where communications are meagre or non-existent contact with the outer world will be so slow that the effect of its impact will not be rapid enough for observation and no change will take place in the primitive community except the gradual adaptation and alteration resulting from the intercourse on the fringes of the area inhabited. Changes of this kind involving a very slow change of environment and outlook are familiar enough in India and have been going on for centuries if not millennia. No serious problem arises until this process of slow adaptation is interfered with by a development of communication and a sudden increase of contacts.

Even excise law although in many ways to the benefit of primitive tribes, may operate as a hardship, and would be found excessively severe if the very proper restrictions on distilling were extended to pachwai and tari made for household consumption and forming a very important part of the diet of tribes that cannot grow sugar and are too poor to buy it. For three months in the hot weather the Marias of Chanda live almost exclusively on a very mildly alcoholic beverage, much as the Angami Naga does to a less degree in Assam. Any one well acquainted with either tribe will vividly realise the hardship that might be wrought by bigoted prohibitions, anxious to disallow to others that freedom which they do not value for themselves

and total prohibition is a policy shared by Hindus and Muslims. The prohibition of distilling itself may be a hardship, as for the Gond who must offer to his god liquor distilled by the family of worshippers, but this is probably one of those that must be borne in the interests of the community, like the game laws that prevent a Kachla Naga or a Kuki from offering game at the graves of the dead during the close seasons, or the troublesome restrictions on homicide which prevent a way from fertilizing his crop with the life—essence of a stranger, or the Kondh from doing the same with the Meriah he has reared for that purpose.

The rapid opening up of communications, involving contact at many points and often the practical settlement of tribal country, entirely alters the aspect of any gradual changes that may have been taking place. Generally speaking it substitutes conflict for contact. Not necessarily, that is, a conflict of arms but of culture and of material interest. Attempts to develop minerals, forests or land for intensive cultivation can only be made at the expense of the tribe whose isolation is thus invaded. The customs which regulate the ownership, usufruct or transfer of land among primitive tribes are generally at variance with those observed by more sophisticated communities, and in the conflict between the two the tribal custom is normally superseded by a code, which is neither valued nor understood by the tribe and in the application of which the tribe is deprived of its property, generally in the name of law, either by alienation to foreigners or by transforming the trusteeship of a tribal chief into absolute ownership of a kind quite foreign to the customs of the tribe. This has befallen both the Mundas, for instance and the hill tribes of Chittagong, to mention two instances only, while even in Rajputana a somewhat similar process has been at work. Here an authority thoroughly conversant with the people and conditions in that Agency states that during the last 25 years there has been a very marked change in the position of landlord from the chiefs downwards:—

“What . . . has happened in Rajputana in the last century is a complete departure from the ancient relationship of peasant and chief, wherein the chief has become securely established in ‘rights’ that were not his a hundred years ago, and the peasant has been deprived both of rights and responsibilities. It would not have been difficult to establish universal franchise a century ago; as a matter of fact it was exercised in inaccessible places without being labelled. To day it would be so difficult as almost to seem an impossible task to make the peasant withdraw his watchful gaze from his landlord’s activities. In the century the operation of British law and its influence has set up the ruling chiefs in a security, authority and prestige that never appertained to their position in earlier times and . . . the peasant has been deprived of just so much as he has accrued to the other Progressively, and at an accelerated pace since Lord Minto’s commencement of the policy of non-interference, the common people have been deprived both of authority and responsibility. The British idea of law and application of it has made this process easy and apparently natural.”

A similar application of alien law also usually disturbs the tribal customs of debt. Tribal customs of debt are frequently, perhaps normally stated in terms of extravagant usury. Such terms however represent less the real customs observed in practice than the ideal which the lender considers ought to be the return, and in point of fact they are qualified by very important considerations. In the first place there is commonly no law of limitation, and the borrower may not expect to repay before the next generation while the lender is very often so placed that there is a moral compulsion to lend under certain circumstances even if no return is expected in his life-time. Thus it is often the custom for a chief to lend paddy to the most indigent and unprofitable of his villagers in times of scarcity though he knows repayment to be extremely unlikely. In any case when repayment does take

place there is normally a settlement by accommodation between both parties which bears little relation to the payment due on a strict interpretation of, the law of usury as formally stated by the tribe. It is only natural that tribesmen whose views of debt are dictated by this sort of vague custom are perfectly ready to subscribe without demur to the most flagrantly usurious agreements exacted by foreign money lenders who intend to invoke a foreign code to compel repayment on the letter of the agreement and at the time when it suits them to do so instead of at such time as the debtor finds himself in a position to pay. Similarly the criminal law of a civilized community is often entirely at variance with what is felt to be just and proper by tribal custom. Afforestation again is a frequent grievance, and in forests which were common property under a tribal regime it becomes a punishable offence to exercise what the tribe regards as an inalienable right. Thus under the Assam Forest Regulations tribal land used for jhumming is held to be Unclassed State Forest, and as such at the absolute disposal of Government. It can be taken and its possessors ousted without any sort of compensation. But this land has by the great majority of hill tribes been regarded for many generations as their most valuable real property. Further under a recent regulation it has been held that a man quarrying stone, for his own use, on his own jhum land is liable to pay Rs. 10 per month or Rs. 100 a year as a permit fee on the ground that the land from which he takes the stone is Unclassed State Forest, although it may have been the subject of bequest, mortgage or transfer by sale and purchase for twenty generations, and its boundaries a matter of common knowledge in the village. Indeed a recent case occurred in which a young and inexperienced officer announced, on the strength of this Unclassed State Forest doctrine that he would recognize no individual rights in *jhum* land, and even fined a man for letting land bought by his own grandfather to another man on lease. Such an action would in some tribes have been almost enough to cause a rebellion by itself; but it was in no way inconsistent with the theory that the tribal land is unclassified State forest. In the Madras Agency Trancs again the same attitude has been taken towards *jhum*, there called *podu*, and has been carried to the extent of the prohibition of cultivation, twice bringing the Sawara tribe to the verge of open rebellion. *Dahia* (or *bewar*) as it is there called, is similarly forbidden in the Central Provinces, compelling the forest tribes to cultivate only under the land settlement system. *Dahia* is wasteful of forest land and may in hill country prove damaging to adjoining plains on account of denudation, the too rapid escape of rain and consequent inundation below. At the same time wasteful cultivation of this kind is very often the only known means of subsistence. It cannot be abandoned in a day for other methods with which the cultivator, whose knowledge is traditional is unfamiliar. Again the exploitation of minerals not only involves the taking up of tribal land but generally the introduction of an alien population, usually of an extremely mixed character and not infrequently exceptionally dissolute. This impinges on tribal life in a number of other disturbing ways. Even the invasion of missionaries is liable to produce as much evil as good, if not more, for their conduct and objects are generally in extreme conflict with tribal religion and with tabus of all kinds and their point of view, readily comprehensible to an alien administration which understands the tribal position very vaguely if at all, and backed as it so often is by influentially vocal societies at a distance, is much more likely to obtain the support of authority than tabus which are on the face of them unreasonable to all except those to whom they are the most vitally important things in life. A similar misunderstanding of the tribal point of view is apt to arise in the case of many customs, and it may be enough to mention that of marriage by a form of capture common to both Bhils and Gonds and although quite familiar to the tribesmen themselves, often capable of being treated by British courts as cases of abduction. It is true that the law would normally require a complaint to move it to action, but it is obvious that a knowledge of the possibility of moving it is likely to encourage complaints from persons who would other-

wise have acquiesced contentedly in tribal custom, and to result in a quite unjust punishment of the party complained against for following a law really known to and admitted by the complainant. A Bhil was convicted and sentenced by a British court just about the time of the 1931 census for just such a breach of the penal code in entire accordance with Bhil custom. Apart from laws in themselves their manner of application may be extremely severe on people whose methods of dealing with antisocial actions or persons is entirely different. No apology is required for quoting at length from Rao Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, himself a practising lawyer in Bihar and Orissa courts :

'The British system of administration of justice. . . . has unintentionally produced certain deplorable effects on the moral character of the aborigines. This complicated system of law and legal procedure which is. . . . suited to advanced districts and people, was naturally not comprehended by the aborigines and was not suited to their level of culture. . . . The British magistrates were inspired with a desire to do were, or still are conversant with the languages, customs and mentality of the people. And thus this complicated system of administration of justice has tended to impair the natural truthfulness and honesty of the people in many cases. By repeated painful experience the people have found that under the complicated and cumbrous Procedure Codes and a too technical Law of Evidence which are now in force and which are beyond their comprehension, their native straight-forwardness and veracity is no match for the chicanery and falsehood and the many subtle tricks employed against them by many of their adversaries. And "law-touts" and other petty-fogging "advisers" are not wanting to induce rather clumsily. But, as is inevitable, the expensive system of litigation through one court after another—Courts of Original Jurisdiction, Courts of First Appeal and Courts of Second Appeal—is ruinous for the poor aboriginal, who, in most cases, cannot fight up to the last, and even those who can, only find themselves in the end utterly ruined through the expenses and trouble of securing ultimate victory. In this way the complicated British-Indian system of administration of justice has more often than not helped in ruining the aborigines economically and in degrading them morally.

'The British system of law and administration has further tended to impair the social solidarity of the tribes and has weakened the authority of the social heads or Panchs and the respect they formerly commanded. Until recently, when Government orders validating tribal customary law regarding succession and inheritance were promulgated, the Courts often disregarded tribal custom against inheritance by daughters and applied to tribal lands the Hindu Succession Act quite inconsistent with the fundamental social structures and ideas of kinship of the tribes. Until recently when rules against alienation of ancestral lands were promulgated by Government, the ancient tribal custom against such alienation was utterly disregarded and through such alienation alien Hindus and admitted to the villages resulting in the further disintegration of the old village community. The recent restrictions against alienation, have come so late, and the people have been now so long accustomed to such transfers, that a large section of the people now feel these restrictions irksome and no longer needed, and subterfuges are often resorted to in order to, evade them.'—'Effects on the Aborigines of Chota Nagpur of their contact with Western Civilization', J. B. O. R. S. 1931.

It is easy to see how a combination of anti-tribal forces is likely to create a condition of excessive discomfort in tribal life, the most serious aspect of which is the complete breakdown of the communal organization. A tribe living in comparative isolation will usually be found to have developed an adaptation to its environment which within certain limits approaches

perfection, an adaptation which may have taken many millennia to accomplish, and the breakdown of which may be the ruin of the tribe, for it is likely to proceed at a far greater rate than either the gradual change in physical environment or than the still slower process of adaptation to that change.

In the past the administration of tribal areas as non-regulation districts has in very many cases done much to make the position easier for the tribes affected. However uncomprehending and ignorant the administration may have been it was in a position to take a list of interest, and to that position have been due precautions such as the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, or such as exemption from the provisions of the Indian Succession Act or of the Stamp Act or restrictions on the appointment of pleaders in courts hearing tribal cases. Even where such precautions have been made they have often been too half-hearted and too late. Of some 30 primitive tribes in the Central Provinces only 9 are specifically exempted from the operation of the Indian Succession Act, while in Assam a hillman who subscribes as he must do when in Government service, to the General Provident Fund cannot nominate as his heir his brother or his brother's son according to his own venerated custom but if he has no issue must nominate his wife. This is reasonable no doubt to a Britisher, but is completely at variance with sentiment and custom in the Assam Hills, and generally with good and sufficient reason. Similarly the Post Office Savings Bank recognizes Hindu and Muslim law but not tribal custom. It seems more than likely that the incorporation of tribal areas into regulation areas, when such areas are governed by more or less democratic forms of government on the constitution of which the tribes will be placed in an insignificant minority, will bring their interests into direct conflict with the interests of their neighbours under conditions in which the administration of the tribal area will have very little power to modify the severity with which it will react on the tribes. Tribes occupying such an area realize little or nothing of the method which laws are administered outside it; if they do they have no means of making themselves heard. The consequence is that a few alien settlers who are able to do so and are wishful to live under the ordinary codes, which give tremendous advantages to traders and others dealing with simple and unlettered men, are likely to succeed (it has under existing conditions often been done) in getting a method of administration extended to a tribal area the disadvantages of which to the tribesmen are completely unappreciated by them until they find themselves irrevocably within its grip. In the process of accommodation it is only too likely that a previously nonhinduised hill tribe may become a member of a caste as has happened to the Turis, Koras and Kharias, to mention three instances from the same part of India, while the cultivator loses his rights in tribal land and degraded to that of a landless labourer.

In the alternative they may retain a sort of emasculated tribal life deprived of the customs and festivals that gave it meaning and cohesion, and fall into that psychical apathy and physical decline which has decimated so many tribal communities in the Pacific and elsewhere; and this decline is accelerated in another way by the opening up of communications. Many new diseases are imported against which no immunity has been evolved, since they did not form part of the environment to which the tribe is adapted, and the result is a staggering mortality from which there may be no recovery. The rapidly approaching extinction of the tribes of Great Andaman has largely been due to diseases imported into the penal settlement and communicated to the Andamanese by convicts. The use of distilled liquor, of opium and even of mercury (as a drug) is performing a similar disservice for other tribes and is likewise the result of the improved communications which corrupt good manners. The Durbar of a State known to the writer vetoed the advent of rail communications on the ground that railways were an evil; they only brought in dirt, disease, crime and strangers, and the state was better without—a judgment in which we may find very much indeed to commend.

Meanwhile the difficulties under which primitive tribes are placed with regard to education have already been pointed out (vide paragraph 141 in Chapter IX) and in Bihar and Orissa a memorandum of the Government itself, submitted to the Statutory Commission, states that in the matter of education the aboriginals of that province as a whole are, relatively to the general population, in a worse position than they were in 1921. They have got a little less than their general share of the big advance made in primary education and decidedly less of the advance in high and middle education. Education in itself is a doubtful blessing in so far as it is apt to unfit them for their environment, but it is probably a necessary weapon of defence for them in the circumstances in which they are placed, perhaps the only one of any permanent value, though the real solution of the problem would appear to be to create self-governing tribal areas with free power of self-determination in regard to surrounding or adjacent provincial units.

J. H. HUTTON,
Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 336 ff.

MAN IN INDIA

Vol. XXVI]

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COMMENT

IN this number we print, as a leading contribution, a discussion by Sarat Chandra Roy of the theory of rent among the Mundas of Chota Nagpur. Originally this paper consisted of submissions made by him as a lawyer before the Settlement Officer, Ranchi and included a detailed analysis of evidence, much of which was of only transient value. We have, therefore, printed the discussion in an abridged form, retaining all that was relevant to the main argument but excluding everything not strictly germane to its chief issue.

In spite of his eloquent advocacy, Sarat Chandra Roy's theory was not accepted and the rents of the Mundas in this case were ordered to be enhanced. His submissions, however, have more than an ephemeral interest. They state in moving language the theory of rent which Uraons and Mundas still hold. They present a masterly review of the agrarian history of Ranchi District. Above all they communicate something of that passion for truth and justice which made Sarat Chandra Roy not only a great anthropologist, but a great lawyer.

It is a tragic corollary of his passing that there is now scarcely a single Lawyer, Munsif or Magistrate in Chota Nagpur who has a fraction of his tribal knowledge. This ignorance and indifference were prevalent even in his lifetime, and in a paper on 'The Effect on the Aborigines of Chota Nagpur of their contact with Western Civilization', Sarat Chandra Roy himself wrote, 'The system of administration of justice, too, has unintentionally produced certain deplorable effects on the moral character of the aborigines. This complicated system of law and legal procedure, which is suited to advanced districts and peoples, was natu-

rally not comprehended by the simple aborigines and was not suited to their level of culture. Although the judges and magistrates were inspired with a desire to do justice, very few of them were, and still are, conversant with the languages, customs and mentality of the people. And thus this complicated system of administration of justice has tended to impair the natural truthfulness and honesty of the people in many cases. By repeated painful experience the people have found that under the complicated and cumbrous Procedure Codes and a too technical Law of Evidence which are now in force and which are beyond their comprehension, their native straightforwardness and veracity is no match for the chicanery and falsehood and the many subtle tricks employed against them by many of their adversaries. And "law-touts" and other petty-fogging "advisers" are not wanting to induce them to adopt the ways of their adversaries. Such advice unhappily they now not unoften follow though rather clumsily. But, as is inevitable, the expensive system of litigation through one court after another—Courts of Original Jurisdiction, Courts of First Appeal and Courts of Second Appeal—is ruinous for the poor aboriginal who, in most cases, cannot fight up to the last, and even those who can, only find themselves in the end utterly ruined through the expense and trouble of securing ultimate victory. In this way the complicated system of administration of justice has more often than not helped in ruining the aboriginals economically and in degrading them morally.' It is true that in this passage Sarat Chandra Roy does not expressly blame the legal profession, but for this general deterioration of tribal morale, lawyers cannot escape some, at least, of the blame.

A not dissimilar view had been expressed fifty years earlier by a Santal guru, Kolean Haram. 'The officers, since they do not know our Santali language, cannot judge right or wrong. They get taken in by the deceptive speeches of the vakils and do not give us justice.'

In 1932 Bodding wrote, 'I believe it is a fact that a good many cases are brought to court that a Santal would never dream of—beginning in his own village. He goes to the court as a speculation, thinking it may be impossible to gain his end by the help of a pleader.'

To this indictment, the precepts and example of Sarat Chandra Roy are partial answers but until they are more widely followed, contacts with the courts are likely to remain an insidious menace to that basic integrity which still to a great extent characterizes aboriginal life.

W. G. ARCHER

NOTE.

I am glad to say that from the first number of Vol. xxvii (1947) it will be possible for *Man in India* to provide contributors of articles of 8 or more pages with 25 reprints free of charge, provided that authors specify their desire to have these reprints when they submit their manuscripts.

LOVE-SONGS FROM OUDH AND RAJPUTANA

OU DH

I

O veiled beauty, lower your eyes,
Lower your eyes.
I wear neither knife nor dagger,
Nor do I wear a sword.
Your lashes act like knives and daggers,
Eyebrows like a sword.
O veiled beauty, lower your eyes.

II

Arise, dear soldier, the troops are on the march,
The troops are about to march.
I am the daughter of a raja,
The daughter of a raja has lost her grace.
Awake, dear soldier, my loved one, awake.
Sleep is sweet to you and dear to you are dreams,
To me is dear your breath.
Awake, dear soldier, the troops are on the march,
My well-beloved, awake.

III

Come into my lane, my love,
Come into my lane.
As the cart moves on the road,
So will I go with you
Come into my lane.
Come into my lane, my love,
Come into my lane.
As the oil burns in the pan,
So will I burn for you,
Come into my lane.

IV

The loved one does not love the lover.
Go, my friend, whatever has
Happened, alas, has happened then.
When the flowers are in bloom,
Beetles begin to hover round
Attracted by the flowers' scent.
For this is a selfish world, my friend,
Alas, it is an age-old truth.
Then go, my friend, whatever has
Happened, alas, has happened then.

RAJPUTANA

V

You have dressed and done your hair
 The lightning flashes so.
 Ho, ho, ho.
 But you have caught me by the wrist,
 The earth is trembling so.
 Ho, ho, ho.
 Wearing the turban of the South
 The brave Kadar came
 You shot an arrow from your eyes
 With unfailing aim.
 Ho, ho, ho.

AHMED ALI

THE THEORY OF RENT AMONG THE MUNDAS OF CHOTA NAGPUR

BY THE LATE SARAT CHANDRA ROY

In this paper, I shall attempt to show that the 'rent' payable by Munda tenants in Chota Nagpur stands on a different footing and belongs to a different category altogether from the 'rent' payable by a Bengal or Bihar raiyat or by a 'Sadān' raiyat in Chota Nagpur. I hope to show that the Bengal theory of 'rent' as a *certain customary proportion of the net produce of a holding* cannot be applied to the case of aboriginal raiyats in Chota Nagpur, and that what is called 'rent' in the case of the holdings of aboriginal tenants originated in a contribution in the nature of 'tribute' or 'aid' paid by their ancestors to the ancestor of the present Maharaja of Chota Nagpur as their leader in war and peace. I hope to prove that these 'rents' were originally fixed without any reference to the yield of the holdings, and *at no period of their history represented a certain proportion of the produce, or its money value*, and that consequently neither any permanent rise in the prices of staple food crops nor any other ground will be available to the 'landlord' to enhance the rate of 'rent'. I shall show that the 'rent' payable by aboriginal tenants is neither 'competition rent' as in England, nor 'customary produce—proportion rent' as in Bengal and Bihar, but stands as a class apart which may be termed '*tribute rent*.' It is unfortunate that the significance and incidents of this rent have been overlooked or at any rate not sufficiently investigated, discussed or appreciated by jurists and economists. And Administrators, Legislators, Revenue Officers and Judges who are generally familiar with the other two forms of rent and have not sufficiently investigated into the history of rent in this district, have been misled in the past and are misled to this day by the analogy of the nature of rents in other parts of India.

In order to determine the liability or non-liability to enhancement of existing rents, we must consider, first of all, the origin and history of Munda tenancies, and, will also refer to the agrarian and rent history of the Sonepur Pargana in general and of a Munda village Berku, in particular.

The history of this village is as follows: The ancestors of the Munda tenants founded the village by clearing the primeval jungles and reclaimed the lands now comprised in their tenancies. They continued to hold the village as Mundari-Khunkattidar peasant-proprietors and in time came to pay through their headmen, a nominal tribute, for the whole village to the ancestors of the present Maharaja of Chota Nagpur, first, in the shape of presents of jungle produce like *hanrua*, *barni*, *sabai*, *kampti*, etc., and assistance in war, and, later, in the shape of annual contributions of a few rupees for the whole village.

Much later, in the twenties of the last century, when Pargana Sonepur was granted in *Jagir* by the then Maharaja of Chota Nagpur to Kuar Harnath Sahi, the latter began a ruthless campaign of expropriation of the Khuntkattidar Mundas of the village. Not content with the small annual contributions then payable by each village in a lump, he began by forcibly raising the amount of annual contributions from the village. Not satisfied with this, too, he cast about for means to break down the communal ownership of the village by the Mundas. He found willing instruments to effect his designs in adventurers to whom he gave leases or *thikas* of villages. These latter, though strenuously resisted in the beginning, at length succeeded in reducing the Mundas from Khuntkattidar owners of the village to the position of Bhuinhars in respect of the lands which they respectively cultivated. This was effected, first, by realising small payments from each Khunt separately as its share of the tribute, misnamed 'rent' of the village, and then by managing to realise by way of rent at fixed rates from the *Parjas* or *Jeth-raiyats* (all aboriginal) who came after the Khuntkattidars or Bhuinhars and cleared jungles and reclaimed lands and whom the original Khuntkattidars had established on some of their own lands. The Thakur and his *Thikadars* began to call such holdings by the name of *rajhas* (or lands from which the Raja's or superior landlord's demand was to be met). The tenancies of the descendants of the Munda founders of the village they named 'Bhuinhari.'

One aggression on the ancient rights of the Mundas followed another. In fact, some of these aggressive and oppressive *thikadars* who were placed over the heads of the original Munda headmen, proved veritable monsters of oppression. When these atrocities became intolerable, the Mundas of the Pargana rose in revolt and there broke out in the Pargana what is known as the Kol Insurrection of 1831-32 which forms a landmark in the History of Chota Nagpur.

During the regime of Kuar Harnath's son, Thakur Indarnath Sahi, the latter through successive *thikadars* vigorously prosecuted the ruthless policy of reducing the status of the Munda descendants of the original founders of the village by still further reducing the area of Bhuinhari lands (which once comprised all the cultivated lands of the descendants of the aboriginal founders of the village). His *thikadars* forcibly seized and appropriated some of the best of these lands for their own cultivation and called them '*manjhihas*' (the *manjhi's* or *thikadar's* share) and *zerait* or *saika* and settled some of them with other new-comers whom the zamindars and *thikadars* brought into the village as their adherents to serve as a counterpoise against the aboriginal tenants and to further the landlords' schemes of aggrandizement.

Even these methods and acts of spoliation did not satisfy the greed of Thakur Indarnath and his *thikadars*; and they went on still further reducing the area of 'Bhuinhari' lands. After having

arbitrarily separated most of the tenants' lands from the Khunt-katti or Bhuinhari stock to which they had all originally belonged, the thikadars called them '*korkor*' lands and began to assess them to a small fixed quit rent of 2 as or 4 as per *kat*. These '*kork r*' lands or rather the bulk of them were in their turn wrongfully reduced further to the status of *rajhas*, lands to be burdened with *rajhas* rents. It may be noted that this conversion of '*korkor*' into *rajhas*—this insidious method of spoliation is still proceeding even with the help of the settlement *amlas*, for some of the lands which were recorded as *korkor* at the last settlement have been mysteriously recorded as *rajhas* at the present settlement. We further have it in evidence (both oral and documentary) that the landlord and his thikadars made repeated attempts to enhance the rent by force and trickery and lost no opportunity of seeking on some pretext or other to screw more out of the tenant than was their due. These thikadars also began to sell the trees of jungles which the tenants had saved from the axe and preserved and nurtured as their own. Even the sacred *sarnas* did not escape their unholy aggressions. The ancestors of these Munda descendants resisted, as best as they could, these and other attempts of the landlords and thikadars to bring them down to the level of ordinary raiyats such as were the *sadan* cultivators. ✓

We further learn that later, when the landlords estate came under the management of the Court of Wards about forty years ago, during the regime of Deputy Commissioner Lt.-Col. Evans Gordon, Tehsildar Bikramajit who had been deputed to prepare a jamabandi of the village demanded bribes for making correct entries; and on the Munda tenants failing to satisfy his illegal demands, some of their *korkor* lands were entered by him as *rajhas* and in some cases the areas of their holdings were exaggerated. The Court of Wards authorities thus misled by the Tehsildars and also through ignorance of the origin and history of the tenancies or through their zeal in the interests of their Ward, arbitrarily, without recourse to any legal proceedings, wrongfully and illegally assessed most of the lands of their holdings with *rajhas* rents. The ancestors of the present tenants, who were simple and illiterate aboriginals, per force submitted to such illegal imposition, as they regarded it as a *hukum* of the *hakim*. The 'Tehsildars' as we read in the Settlement Report (p. 83) were regarded by the Mundas as 'Sarkari Hores' or Government officials—objects of fear and awe. The aboriginal tenants were further led to believe by the Tehsildars and other creatures of the landlord that the rents then assessed would never be enhanced any further. But now they find that it was a mendacious hoax and false assurance. And they now wring their hands in despair and tear their hair in sullen indignation and impotent rage. ✓

This analysis accords perfectly well with the accounts given in authoritative books of history about the successive stages of the

disintegration of Mundari-Khuntkatti villages. Thus Mr Reid gives the history in his last Settlement Report (pp. 13 ff.) as follows:—‘All that is certain is that the aboriginal tribes, the Mundas, the Uraons and the Kharias penetrated the country and reclaimed it from the virgin forest. There is no doubt that the Mundas were the first comers They have left numerous traces of their early settlements in the north-west, where it is not uncommon to find in many villages, now inhabited solely by the Uraons, the remains of Munda burial grounds (*Sasandiris*), which prove beyond doubt, that the Mundas were the original reclaimers of the soil . . .

‘At a very early period, possibly in the tenth century of the Christian era, the ancestors of the present Maharaja of Chota Nagpur appear to have established themselves as Chiefs of the primitive Munda tribes who then inhabited the country. The Uraons, who arrived in the country considerably later than the Mundas, appear to have acquiesced in the rule of these Chiefs.

‘On the organization of the primitive Munda community, the whole country was divided into parhas consisting of from 15 to 20 villages each, over which a Chief presided. It is probable that these Chiefs elected of their own free will the Khukra Chief (the present Maharaja’s ancestor) as their feudal superior. Possibly, he succeeded in imposing his supremacy on them. Whatever may have been the course of events, it is certain that the original Chief of Chota Nagpur was a Munda. As the family prospered, they intermixed with the Rajput families of Pachete and Singbhum and eventually with others. When the family joined the Hindu community, it became a great object of the Chiefs to induce other Hindus to come and settle in the country, and they succeeded in inducing numbers of Rajputs, Brahmins, Baraiks and others to settle, by making grants of villages on liberal conditions.

‘With their help, the Chota Nagpur Chief succeeded in maintaining his position against neighbouring Rajas, and in managing and controlling the aborigines so effectively, that the latter have in course of time been generally reduced to the status of cultivators, pure and simple. So much is this case, that there is no part of the Ranchi district in which the aborigines have succeeded in retaining any considerable share of their proprietary rights in the soil, save a small area in the present Khunti subdivision, where the Mundari Khuntkattidars have succeeded in retaining their ancient rights unimpaired to this day. The Muhammadan Government was always content to leave the administration of the country to the Raja, provided he remitted a small annual tribute. He was thus free to deal as he chose with his subjects. His authority was enormously augmented by the arrival of the various Hindu adventurers whom he induced to settle in the country with their dependents, and he was, therefore, in course of time strong enough to wrest the villages from the hands of the old village communities. Most of them were gradually dispossessed, and

their villages given to Hindu Jagirdars or resumed by the Raja himself. ✓

✓The next step was to impose *rent* on the villagers. In early times, it appears to have been the custom that the clearers of the soil were recognized as the *owners*. The cultivators, it is true, rendered slight services or paid a small tribute to their local chief, and he in turn rendered service and tribute to the Raja. But of *rent*, in the sense in which that word is now commonly used, there was none. The state of affairs was no doubt the same as that which prevails today in the Khuntkatti villages in the Munda country, where the descendants of the original clearers, who are the proprietors of the soil, pay only a small subscription of a few rupees (*Chanda*) to the immediate landlord, for the whole village. The Hindu Jagirdars, the servants of the Raja, were naturally discontented with this state of things. They gradually imposed payments of various kinds, and demanded greatly increased services. They were more civilised and therefore better organized than the aborigines, most of whom were forced to comply with what they regarded as their unjust demands. The foundations of agrarian discontent and trouble were therefore, laid throughout the district, long before the era of British dominion. An understanding of the early relations between the aborigines and their chiefs will help to explain the claim, which was at one time persistently made by the Mundas, and has been sometimes made even by the Uraons, that Chota Nagpur proper is their "Raj", and that they are not liable to pay rents for the lands, which they and their ancestors cleared, but only a small tribute to the Raja, and taxes to the paramount power.' ✓

Mr Reid then passes over abruptly to the Munda insurrection of 1831-32 in the Sonepur Pargana (or the Jeria Estate) and explains its causes, leaving the agrarian history of the intervening period untold. The main features of that history in so far as it concerns the present case may be briefly told by quoting a few passages from other writers on the subject.

Mr Webster, then Manager of the Chota Nagpur Maharaja's Estate, wrote in his well-known report of 8 April 1875, on the land tenures of Chota Nagpur, which unfortunately deals with the central parts alone of the Ranchi District,—'Before the Hindu Jagirdars first obtained a footing in the country, there being no landlord, *there could have been no rent.*' Another account (*The Mundas and their Country*, pp. 141 ff.) collated from the traditions of the people and the evidence of language, place-names and archaeological and other remains, gives the following history of the migrations of the Mundas to Pargana Sonepur:—'The prolific Uraons living in their midst had by this time multiplied to an appalling extent. The Rajas too perhaps showed signs of lording it over the people. And the assumption of an aggressive policy by the newly made Raja would naturally send an irritable shiver

throughout Mundadon. And what with the one circumstance and what with the other, the situation became extremely distasteful to the proud and conservative Mundas whose instincts were essentially democratic. The thorn (Kingship) they had themselves planted in their midst began to bleed them to desperation. And away they marched once more and crossed the Subarnarekha and the Kanchi and migrated further ahead to the jungles on the south and south-east of the central plateau, leaving the Uraons in occupation of what is now the Parganas of Khukra and Udaipur. The names of numerous villages . . . the many characteristic Munda Sasandiris or sepulchral stones, . . . the existence of a Pahan or priest of the Munda tribe among masses of Uraon population; the wholesale adoption of the Mundari language (and customs) by the Uraon population around the present town of Ranchi, all these bear unmistakeable testimony to the former Munda occupation of this part of the plateau. . .

In this way the majority of the Mundas once more secluded themselves away from all aliens in the rocky fastnesses and jungles, of Parganas, Sonepur, Tamar, Bundu and Siri, and founded new villages of the same primitive type that they had left behind them. In course of time, these new villages too came to pay a certain nominal contribution called "Chanda" or subscription to the Maharaja through their Mankis or *patti*-chiefs. . .

It was in the villages established by the comparatively docile Uraons that the division of the cultivated lands of the village into Bhuinhari, Rajhas and Manjihis appears to have been first introduced. The Mundas, always zealously tenacious of their own institutions and averse to change naturally resisted tooth and nail all attempts at a disintegration of their village communes. The account ends thus (pp. 169 ff.) :—'In the end only the Munda settlements nearer the Uraon country and in closer contact with Uraon settlements succumbed to the onslaught. The Khuntkatti nature of a number of villages hitherto held by the descendants of the original settlers in common ownership was at length seriously impaired. As the result of this mutilation, the proprietary right of the village community over a large part of the *don* and *tamr* lands of the village was materially affected, the Jagirdar usurping the right to levy a *rent* on these lands in lieu of the *supplies* hitherto given as the Raja's dues. These lands now came to be called the *Rajhas* (or *Rajangs*, literally 'the share of the Raja').

Out of these rajhas lands the Jagirdar and later on the Thikadar gradually laid hold of some of the finest plots, and these came to be known as the *manjihis* (literally, the share of the manjhi or thikadar). The waste lands, or jungles remained, as before, the common property of the village community. Thus by slow degrees, a number of what were originally intact Khuntkatti villages were at length reduced to what are now known as Bhuinhari villages.

'Some of the more unyielding among the Mundas of these villages appear to have retreated to the jungles further south rather than submit to such ruthless expropriation. Thus, we hear of Gaasi Munda of the Purti Kili, then living in village Hasa, not far off from Khunti, emigrating to the mountainous and jungly tract further to the south-east, and his descendants founded villages all around them, where the Khuntkatti system is still in full vigour.'

Thus were founded the Mundari Khuntkatti villages on the most southern and south-eastern parts of the district, of which only 156 villages have succeeded in retaining to this day their old land system more or less intact, and which the last Settlement saved from further disintegration.

To return to Mr Reid's account. Mr Reid passes over the various minor disturbances in the Munda country in the early years of British rule, and continues the agrarian history as follows:—At page 22 of the Settlement Report, he says:—'In 1820, serious disturbances broke out in Tamar, which required the despatch of a considerable force to put down. In 1826, Armai and Gobindpur thanas were taken out of the hands of the Raja, and their expenses, defrayed by Government. It was not, however, till 1831 when the general insurrection of the Kols broke out that the attention of Government was really arrested. For a long time the discontent had been growing among the Mundas of Sonepur owing to the encroachment of the foreigners, who were continually arriving and settling in the country. But the immediate cause of the outbreak was the action of Kumar Harnath Sahi, a younger brother of the Raja, in giving out several villages in farm to Sikhs, Muhammadans and others over the heads of the rightful owners, the Mankis and Mundas. 'In this way twelve villages that had belonged to Sing Rai Manki were given to the Sikhs.'

At page 23, he writes,— 'The causes of the insurrection are thus explained in detail in the report of the Joint Commissioners, Mr Dent and Captain Wilkinson written soon after the suppression of the revolt :—

'All the Mankis of Sonepur had for some years been deprived of their hereditary estates by *Harnath Sahi, the Kuar of Gobindpur*, (who, it may be pointed out was the ancestor of the plaintiff in this case) who had farmed them to thiccadars on tenures varying. These thiccadars had rendered themselves obnoxious not only to the Mankis but to the cultivator. They would not permit the former to have even the fruit of trees which themselves and their forefathers had planted, and, having only a temporary interest in the land, they naturally raised from it the highest possible rents. . . .

'In the villages which were first attacked, the Kols were heard to say that they would not leave a thiccadar alive in Sonepur who were enriching themselves on their (the Kols) lands while the rightful owners of them were starving . . .

'The Kols throughout Nagpur had within the last few years had their rents increased (*i.e.*, quit rent for each whole village, by their elaquadars, zemindars and thiccadars 35 per cent by a process mentioned in the 19th paragraph of our letter of the 5th April. They had made roads through the parganna without payment, as begarries (forced labour). The Mahajuns, who advanced money and grain, managed within a 12 month to get from them 70 per cent, and sometimes more.'

Then at p. 26, Mr Reid writes, "The suppression of the revolution was followed immediately by a number of administrative reforms. In Sonapur, the Mankis and Mundas were all reinstated in their respective villages on reduced rentals, and the thiccadars and mukarridars were referred to the Kuar Harnath Sahi for the adjustment of their "claims" . . .

'The question of the rents payable by the great mass of the agricultural Kol population was, however, left untouched so that the so-called reforms merely affected the fringe of the trouble.'

Then at page 34, Mr Reid continues,—'It has been shown above that the influx of hordes of middlemen gradually led to the Kol insurrection of 1831-32. About this time not only were the village headmen, the Mankis and the Mundas, being supplanted, but the raiyats were being deprived of the oldest and most valuable lands in the villages by the new comers. In effect little or no redress could be obtained by the aborigines. The rising of the Kols cleared the country of aliens for a time; but the insurrection was put down with a strong hand, and, though several remedial measures were passed, the havoc and destruction wrought by the aborigines during the brief period of their ascendancy had naturally exasperated the landlords. They retaliated severely, and a considerable disturbance of peasant proprietary tenure undoubtedly occurred.' At pp. 78-79, Mr Reid further informs us that after the Kol insurrection was put down, the tide of official favour turned against the Zemindars. He writes, 'It was suppressed by Government and for a time there was a reaction in favour of the Zemindars. Courts were indeed established but the officers did not always understand local customs, nor were the aborigines in those days fit to compete on anything like even terms with their Hindu antagonists in the courts of law (they are unfortunately not so even now). The consequence was that in the main *the disputes about rent charges were not settled through their agency, but in the villages themselves, and the criterion was the relative strength of the parties and their ability to enforce or resist demands. This state of affairs existed down to quite recent times.* This fact accounts for the extraordinary divergence between the incidents of tenancies in different parts of the country. The Hindus as a race never conquered the country. Their introduction was at first a peaceful penetration, but it gradually involved a continually increasing burden on the original settlers.

'Closely connected with the disputes about rent charges and praedial conditions is the question of possession of fields. The refusal of the aborigines in parts of the country to comply with the exorbitant demands of the Zemindars from the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century led to reprisals and counter-reprisals. When the raiyats refused to pay increased demands, the Zemindars began to dispossess them by force and take their lands into their Khas cultivation, or to sublet them to Hindus at enhanced rates. The aborigines, being on a much lower plane of civilization and lacking the power to combine, lost heavily at first. The balance was to some extent redressed by the advent of the European Christian Missionaries, who took the side of the raiyats, and the agrarian struggle for the last 30 years has been a tug-of-war with the landlords and Hindu raiyats, who are locally known as *Sadans* on one side, and the aborigines supported by the missionaries on the other.'

At page 82 of the report Mr Reid refers to the breaking down of the Khuntkatti rights of the Mundas by Thakur *Fanimatuk Nath Sahi*, a maintenance holder of the Thakur of Jeria; and then goes on to say,—'The Manager of the Encumbered Estates, *whether through ignorance of the system of land tenure or through a mistaken zeal for the estates under management, it is difficult to say, proceeded almost at once (after the management was vested in him) to destroy the Khuntkatti system throughout the pargana.*' Referring to the attempt of another Jagirdar of the Jeria Thakur to get hold of some lands as Manjhihas in village Tilma where there was no manjhihas and the rejection of the claim by Captain Grey under section 538 of the Criminal Procedure Code, Mr Reid writes, 'The Manager was not satisfied with this decision (which is an interesting commentary on the system of management then pursued under the Manager of the Encumbered Estates Department) and he brought a civil suit for a declaration that there were manjhihas lands in the village, and, strange to say, obtained a decree. The Khuntkatti status was thus destroyed, and the local tahsildars of the Encumbered Estates Department and the Thakur made further encroachments.'

At page 83, Mr Reid further quotes the report of one of his Assistant Settlement Officers regarding some of the Sonapur Pargana villages as follows, 'The records of the bhuinhari operations show that, although some villages were treated as bhuinhari villages, there were others in which the Special Commissioners merely measured the *Mundai* and *Pahanai* lands, (as in Birhu) the question of the Khuntkatti status of the villagers being left open. During the management of the Encumbered Estates Department, the Khuntkatti status in these villages was completely broken. The Khuntkatti lands of the original settlers came to be described in the estate papers as rajhas (raiya). Another source of mischief was the settlement of the so-called manjhihas lands with the dis-

qualified proprietor. The buinhari records showed that there were few demarcated manjhihas lands in the villages. The disqualified proprietor, when making over charge to the department, showed some manjhihas lands in almost every village, largely in excess of those which he really possessed, apparently with a view to create evidence of their existence. He subsequently took settlement of these lands himself, and then proceeded to take possession on the strength of the evidence so created, with the assistance of the estate tahsildars, who posed among the Mundas as Government officials (Sarkari heroes). The result is that the landlord is now possessed of manjhihas or rather khas lands in every village.'

Mr Reid concludes his reference to the Jeria Estate by saying that 'the Khuntkatti status in the Jeria Estate was broken when Colonel Evans Gordon was Deputy Commissioner. The example of the Encumbered Estates management must have been a powerful incentive to other landlords, and they, no doubt, followed the example.' This observation would apply not only to the breaking of Khuntkatti rights intact in Khuntkatti villages, but the degradation of the status of bhuinhars in Bhuinhari villages like Paira, Dorma and Birhu. I shall refer to a few earlier Government reports in order to complete the account of the rent history of the Jeria Estate or the Sonepur Pargana.

The high-handed dealings of the Manager of the Encumbered Estates and the Court of Wards with the tenants of the Jeria Estate were not started by the Manager on his own initiative. He only carried on (mechanically and unconsciously, as may be presumed) the policy of expropriation and spoliation which the founder of the Estate, Kuar Harnath Sahi had initiated and which led to the Kol insurrection of 1931-32.

Kuar Harnath's son and successor Thakur Indar Nath (the great-grandfather of the plaintiff) carried on Kuar Harnath's policy with as much zeal and zabardasti as his predecessor (which zabardasti some landlords would call state-craft),—and with a greater advantage, because in those days some of the Zemindars were vested with police powers. Thakur Indar Nath, for example was the Illaquadar of Police at Govindpur (near Jeria) which was then the headquarters of the Sonepur Pargana.

Kuar Harnath Sahi's part in the campaign against the Mundas had been to break down the Khuntkatti system which was the original system of landholding in the Munda country, and he had succeeded in breaking that system in a major portion of his estate, and in confining their mutilated Khuntkatti, (which came to be called in these villages Bhuinhari) rights only to their original clearances, and calling the rest of the cultivated lands by the name of Rajhas (*Rajangs*) or the Raja's or landlord's share which would be liable to pay rent to the landlord. Thakur Indarnath's part was to rob the Mundas of as much of their Bhuinhari lands as

possible and annex them to his Rajhas, and, if possible, carve some manjhihas out of them. The Khuntkatti-breaking, Bhuinhari-reducing and Rajhas-making period of Kuar Harnath's regime was followed by the Bhuinhari-breaking and Rajhas-swelling and Manjhihas-grabbing period of his successor Thakur Indarnath.

Before the Sonapur Pargana was granted by the then Maharaja of Chota Nagpur as Khorposh to his younger brother, Kuar Harnath Sahi, all the villages of the pargana maintained their Khuntkatti status intact, as stated by Mr Reid in his Settlement Report. The whole pargana was divided into a number of circles, each consisting of a number of villages over which there was a Manki who collected a tribute of from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 from each village and remitted it to the Maharaja, his own remuneration being the *chandas* collected from his 'chaputa' village. Kuar Harnath, as Government reports show, through the agency of his thikadars succeeded in breaking down this system in the great majority of villages in the Sonapur Pargana.

Until Kuar Harnath obtained this pargana as Jagir, the Maharajas of Chota Nagpur (whose seat was in the heart of the Oraon country, far removed from the Munda country) and his Jagirdars had been busy with the expropriation of the Bhuinhars of the Oraon country and reducing most of them to the status of ordinary raiyats by transferring most of their Bhuinhari lands into Rajhas, by forcibly enhancing their rents beyond the customary rate of Rs. 3 per poa, and by levying all sorts of illegal imposts whose number in time swelled to 36, so that the great bulk of their Rajhas lands were finally converted into *Chhatisa* and with the exception of a few Kats of *tanr* land allowed as *lagan tanr*, the remaining *tanr* lands of a raiyat's holding were converted into *damgat* or rent-paying. It was then that *Rakumats* were first ushered into being and came to be levied only for *lagan tanr* lands attached to *Chhatisa* holdings. It was the account of the rents and rakumats and other liabilities of these parts (the *Khas bhandar* of the Maharaja, as they are called) and the jagirdari villages of the Oraon country that Mr Webster and Mr Slack gave in their reports. Mr Webster expressly dealt only with the cultivating tenures of the central and north-eastern portion of the Ranchi district, besides the *Panch* parganas of the Ranchi district and Tori and Opa parganas of what is now Palamau district (Webster's Report, Part III, paras 2, 69, 80, 81). In the villages of the Khunti and Torpa, thanas in Sonapur argaBnas as the villages notes will show, no *chhatisa* lands with a fixed proportion of *lagan tanr* could be introduced and no *rakumats* could be levied. It was Thakur Indarnath, who lived during the Bhuinhari survey of 1869-1880, who, during his regime of 40 years or so, caused the greatest havoc among the Khuntkatti and Bhuinhari rights of the Mundas by breaking down intact Khuntkatti villages, converting some Bhuinhari lands into Majhias, and by converting most Bhuinhari

or Korkar lands into Rajhas, but he never thought of or succeeded in assessing rent on *tanr* lands or imposing *rakumats*. The decree for *batta* at one anna per rupee against one Oraon raiyat of Birhu (Ex. B) only goes to show that either the Oraon tenants settled in the village before 1836 or that *batta* was an illegal imposition. It was under Act XIII of 1830 that sicca supees ceased to be legal tender, but was receivable at the treasuries subject to a charge of one per cent for recoinage. Presumably the impost of 1 anna as *batta* was claimed on the pretext to cover loss in exchange. And presumably too the entry of 1 anna per rupee in the Jamabandi issued to substantiate the claim to *batta* and not *rakumat* proper.

Already in his report, dated the 27th August 1839, Dr Davidson, then the District Magistrate and Collector, or as he was then designated the Principal Assistant to the Governor-General's Agent, for this district, who understood the term 'Bhuinhari' as synonymous with 'Khuntkatti,' wrote,— 'The Bhuinhari lands exist in every village in Nagpur. They are held rent free by the Bhuinhars or descendants of the original clearers of the land. If the Bhuinhars die without heirs or leave the village, the owner takes possession of his land and includes it in his Rajhas, till the Bhuinhars or his heirs return, when they are entitled to receive back their Bhuinhari land on their old tenure. The owners of the village often resort to ill-usage or false complaints against the Bhuinhars to induce them to leave the village and at any subsequent time on their wishing to return, refuse to restore his lands. This is a great injustice according to all Nagpur ideas, for by the old custom of the country the Bhuinhar has an undoubted right to receive back his lands whenever he or his heirs return . . .

'The disturbances in Nagpur in 1832, were caused by no one cause so much as the dispossession of the Mundas and Mankis, who are the Bhuinhars of Sonepur of their lands and until the Bhuinhars are protected in the possession of their lands, we never can be certain of the peace of the country . . .

'A reference to a regular suit is not at all applicable to a Cole, and is so ordered, in nine out of ten cases the powerful zamindars will thereby be able to defeat the poor Bhuinhars.' (Agrarian Reports, II, p. 6).

Mr (afterwards Sir Henry) Ricketts, then Member of the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, made in 1854-55 a prolonged tour of inquiry for over a year in Chota Nagpur and in his report refers to the expropriation of Bhuinhars, which was still going on, in the following passages:— 'Though there was no complaint preferred to me, there seems reason to apprehend, that the people of the district, the Coles, suffer much injustice at the hands of the foreign middle men introduced by the Rajah, their Zemindar.' Dr Davidson, who was a person of much intelligence, and studied the condition of the province with much attention, writing in 1839, says:— 'In point of fact, there was no regular police or administration of

justice in Nagpur till the present agency was established; that they (the Coles) are frequently imposed on by their land-holders is not for want of comprehension, but that they have been so long completely left to their mercies, and entirely deprived of any protection from them, that it is difficult for them to make up their minds to resist.' Major Hamington (then Deputy Commissioner of the district) tells me that in Chota Nagpur the Bhuinhari lands which exist in every village, have been exposed to the rapacity of middlemen, aliens who are hated by the people, and who, to obtain these lands, spare no species of force or fraud:—against these our courts do not afford any facile remedy, and the day may not be distant when the people, goaded beyond endurance, may take the law into their own hands. To protect these under-tenures is therefore not only as a duty important, but it is also essential to the tranquillity of the country. Again, Mr Ricketts writes, 'It must be a hopeless contest between a middleman of any degree and a Zemindar in charge of the Police. However carefully his rights may have been ascertained and recorded, if the Zemindar Darogah is resolved he shall go, he must go, his ruin may be effected in a hundred ways, and if he resist, will be effected, though the Officer in charge of the district be his friend.' (Rickett's Report on Chota Nagpur, pp. 14 and 15). Thakur Indar Nath Sahi, the then proprietor of the Jaria Estate, was in charge of the Gobindpur thana as Illaquadar of Police, and took the utmost advantage of his position to oppress and exploit his tenants.

The truth of Mr Rickett's observations about the dangers of entrusting police functions to the Zemindars and of his apprehensions regarding future agrarian disturbances owing to the landlords' aggressions on Bhuinhari lands by either looting them or converting them into Rajhas, was before long forcibly demonstrated by fresh disturbances in the Jaria Estate. Captain Davies, then senior Assistant Commissioner of the district in his report on 'The Recent Riots in Pergannah Sonapore' to the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, dated 15 March 1859, wrote, 'It will be seen that throughout Chota Nagpur there is a class of people called Bhuinhars, who as original clearers of the land, or their descendants, hold a certain portion of such land rent-free or at half the village rate; in Pergannah Sonapore there is scarcely a single village without such under-tenures. The Bhuinhars generally are an exceedingly simple race, and, with few exceptions, the landholders and farmers of villages or their agents have always been too ready to take advantage of their simplicity to deprive them by fraud or force of portions, and in some cases the whole, of their land, reducing them to the position of the ordinary ryots, or compelling them to pay rent generally at half the village rate as described in Mr Davidson's 17th paragraph. The mode of doing this is generally by taking possession of the land of a Bhuinhar who happens to go away for a short time and never returning it. If this were done in 1839

how much more frequent must it have become, when the landholders have since had the help of scheming and acute mooktears to assist them in cases which the poor Bhuinhar has had the courage to bring into court. Another plan of detaching these tenures from their original owners is by pandering to the wants of these poor people, always too ready to take money when it is to be had on what they consider easy terms, and when involved in difficulties they alienate their land for ever. This system of encroaching on the Bhuinhari rights has been progressing year by year till in many instances they have been reduced nearly to penury, and are almost as much in the power of the Zemindars as ordinary ryots. This is found more particularly the case in villages held by farmers or middlemen between the Zemindars and ryots, who are from their oppression and exactions particularly obnoxious to the latter.

'Since the establishment of the German Mission at Chota Nagpur, as might have been expected, the spread of Christianity has been confined chiefly to these simple Coles, and with Christianity has naturally come an appreciation of their rights as original clearers of the soil, which rights in many instances they have asserted and established; this, independent of other causes which induce the higher castes of natives to view with displeasure the spread of Christianity, caused great alarm amongst the landholders and farmers, who were not slow to use against these converts every means of persecution they could safely venture on, but with no other effect than the spread of conversion.

'During the disturbances which followed the mutiny of the Ramghur Battalion in August 1857, the Zemindars taking advantage of the absence of the authorities, oppressed and plundered the whole of the native converts, many of whom preserved their lives only by seeking with their families the protection of the jungles. On the restoration of order the Zemindars, apparently afraid of what they had done, ceased to molest them for a time, and as they received assistance from the relief fund to enable them to cultivate their lands, they assumed an independence which irritated the landholders, and when the time came for cutting the rice crops for the past year, they again came into collision.'

Captain Davies then describes a serious affray that took place between Bhuinhars and their Zemindars at village Jhupra in Pergannah Sonapur, and goes on to say, 'Besides the affray above noticed, the only serious one which has occurred in this Pergannah was in November last. In this case Anand Singh, Jagheerदार of Bala, assisted by others, amongst them some servants of Thakoor Indarnath Sahi, Illaquadar of Police, attempted to coerce the ryots of that village, many of whom are nominally Christians. They assisted by those of adjacent villages, opposed force to force; an affray ensued, and two men were killed on the side of the Jagheerदार; three men, one a servant of the Thakoor, and a horse belonging to another one, besides some arms, were captured and taken by the

Christians to the Sub-Assistant Commissioner to Ranchi, together with the body of one of the men slain in the affray, and then lodged their complaint. In this case both parties were to blame and will be committed for trial.

The Police of Pergannah Gobindpore is entrusted to the Zemindar, Thakoor Indarnath Sahi, whose conduct I shall now proceed to notice. I consider that both as a police officer and a Zemindar, he has most signally failed in his duty. He is a weak, effeminate man, entirely in the hands of the people about him, and from the commencement of this agitation until my arrival at Gobindpore, he remained shut up in his house at Jhurria instead of proceeding into the district to ascertain the true cause of the excitement there, and exerting his influence to quell it, and when asked by me why he so acted, he admitted that he was afraid. His culpability, however, did not end here, for I find that his personal attendants, men of influence about his person, assisted in at least one affray, and it is absurd to suppose that it was without his knowledge or consent.

Again, acting on a perwannah received from the Sub-Assistant Commissioner, he assembled his Jagheerdars with their followers, numbering not less than 200 people, ostensibly to assist the police. These with his subordinate police officers proceeded to several villages, apprehended the whole of the Christians and their relatives, and carried them off to the Thakoor's house, where some, against whom false accusation of dacoity and plunder had been preferred, were thrown into the stocks, and the houses of many of the Christians were plundered by the Jagheerdar's followers, in the village of Jhubra. The Christians, seeing the approach of this force, all fled, so the party contented themselves with setting fire to the house of one of the Christians containing a quantity of grain etc. I myself visited the spot and found the blackened ruins and burnt grain.

In more than one instance the Illaquadar of Police has been guilty of detaining prisoners in his own custody for a most unwarrantable time. On my arrival I found at his house, which is in fact the thannah, a man who had been in confinement for one month, and this man, a Christian, is the owner of the house at Jhubra which had been burnt, as noticed in the preceding paragraph. Probably he would not have been then sent to me, had I not issued a peremptory order for all prisoners under trial being forwarded without delay. To make matters worse, a false entry was made in the calendar to the effect that the man has been apprehended only three days before he was sent to me. It is not difficult to guess why this poor man was detained so long, and when I came to enquire into the charge against him, I found there was no evidence whatever tending to implicate him.

Immediately on my arrival at Gobindpore, a complaint was made against the Illaquadar of Police that he had allowed a prisoner

to be so maltreated while in confinement that he died under it. The fact of this case I find to be that the unfortunate man did die whilst in confinement in the stocks and with hand-cuffs on. I caused the body to be exhumed and found the latter still on. The Illaquadar reported the death to have occurred from natural causes, and of course has plenty of witnesses to prove it. On the other hand, the companions of the deceased all declare that he died from ill-usage and want of food. One thing, however, is clear—the deceased and his companions were illegally detained in the stocks for six days, and if the Illaquadar's report be true, the poor creature was laid up for five days with fever and a bad cough, and yet he was left to die hand-cuffed and with his feet in the stocks, and it would appear that the charge on which he was confined was a false one. This man also was a Christian.

'The inefficiency of this police I have on more than one occasion had to comment on, and when, as I have shown, the Zemindar has so shamefully abused the power entrusted to him, has been so negligent in the performance of his duties, and has shown himself so inimical to his rayats who profess Christianity, of whom he has a considerable number, I do not consider that he can no longer be safely entrusted with police powers.' (Chota Nagpur Agrarian Reports, II, p.) Colonel Dalton, the then Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, in forwarding this report of Captain Davies to Government, wrote in his letter No. 70, dated 25 March 1859 as follows : 'Captain Davies appears to have applied himself to the enquiry in a spirit of perfect impartiality, and the conclusions he has arrived at are, I doubt, not quite correct. They fully bear out all I have myself ascertained on the subject from such personal investigations as I had opportunities of making.

'These disturbances no doubt originated, first, in the wrongful dispossession by Zemindar and thiccadars or farmers of the descendants of old proprietary cultivators from lands which had been in their family *rent-free* for generations in virtue of their ancestors having been the original clearers. Such tenures, called *bhuinhari*, are to be found in most of the Chota Nagpur villages, and the Zemindars or farmers have for years availed themselves of every opportunity of assessing them or of ousting the old proprietors.' (*Agrarian Report*, p. 1).

We learn from a Government Resolution, dated the 25 November 1880, that towards the end of 1858, conflicts took place between the landlords and their Christian tenants and it became necessary to despatch a regiment of native infantry from Ranchi to Gobindpore to assist the local police in preserving order in Pergannah Sonapore and Bussia, where the agitation had assumed a most threatening aspect (*Agrarian Report* II, p. 88). And we find the Secretary to Government in his letter, dated 15 April 1859, to the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur communicating Government orders about withdrawing police

powers from Thakur Indarnath Sahi in the following terms :—‘Th conduct of the Thakoor of Gobindpore has been highly reprehensible. It is quite clear that he must be at once divested of his police authority, and His Honour awaits the further report you propose to send in, regarding Captain Davies’ proposal to substitute an establishment under the direct control of the district officer for that hitherto employed by the Thakoor.’ Referring to Captain Davies’ proposal that Bhuinhari lands in every village should be defined and registered and his Sub-Assistant, Lal Lokenath Sahi might be employed on this duty, the Secretary to Government in the same letter wrote :—‘In this suggestion the Lieutenant Governor entirely concurs, and arrangements will be made as soon as practicable for relieving the Sub-Assistant’s duties at Ranchi, and for placing an officer of the civil service in charge of the Gobindpore Sub-division.’

This Lal Lokenath belonged to the same family as the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur and the Thakoor of Jaria, and was himself a Zemindar, and the Bhuinhari registers prepared by him raised various complaints. And on his death before the work was completed, Lieutenant Money, the then Assistant Commissioner of the district was directed by higher authorities to examine and report on the Bhuinhari registers compiled by Lal Lokenath. Lal Lokenath was employed in making a register of Bhuinhari lands from 1858 till his death in August, 1862. (Agr. Rep. II, 11), Captain Money reported to the Commissioner as follows :—

‘I carefully examined one half of the Lal’s work.. These registers bear evidence in themselves that perfect reliance cannot be placed on them, as in some cases after having registered lands as Bhuinhari, the Lal has, without assigning reasons, cancelled the register and recorded them as *rajhas*.’ Again, after citing instances of the Lal’s vagaries Lieutenant Money continues :—

‘It struck me that the Lal had acted very arbitrarily in many cases in taking lands out of Bhuinhars’ possession and making them over to the zemindar and registering them as *rajhas*, although he admitted the Bhuinhars’ prior right I would also state that the Lal’s action in dispossessing the actual possessors of lands, however uncertain their right, was calculated to deepen the disputes between Bhuinhars and Zemindars, especially in those cases where the Lal himself appears to have been of opinion that the lands were really the Bhuinhari right of those holding them at the time he registered them as *rajhas*.’ (*Agrarian Report*, Vol. II, pp. 15-16). Another serious objection to Lal Lokenath’s registers is thus explained by Deputy Commissioner Oliphant in his letter forwarding Lieutenant Money’s report.—‘There was one point in connection with this Bhuinhari tenure in which many of the courts differed from the opinion held by the Lal, for instance, the Lal appears to have laid down that no land except low land could be Bhuinhari land’

The majority of courts, however, appear to have held a different opinion'.

Lal Lokenath commenced operations towards the end of 1859 and completed work in only 429 villages when he died in August 1862. Disputes again revived. But nothing further was done to protect the Bhuinhari tenancies of the aboriginals from being either looted or converted into Rajhas, until Government received a petition purporting to come from 14,000 aboriginal Christians of the district complaining of systematic oppression on the part of the Zemindars. After inquiry, it was considered essential to make a complete record of Bhuinhari tenures. Act II of 1869 was passed, and registration of Bhuinhari tenures in 2,482 villages in all was commenced on 1 April 1869 and concluded by 31 March 1880.

But the completion of these operations did not end the aboriginal tenants' trouble. As Mr Hallet writes in the *District Gazetteer* (p. 147) 'Many cultivators either from ignorance or owing to the persuasion of the landlords, failed to claim their (bhuinhari) laws. As Deputy Commissioner Mr Power, who was not known to be a sympathetic towards the tenants, reported, 'As the bhuinhari cases came to an end, the struggle for the *rajhas* commenced. Whether the lands really belonged to the *bhuinhar* or not, the Illaquadar might be supposed to say to a bhuinhar, 'you claimed all your land as *bhuinhari* and have only got a decree for a fraction; you have put me to expense in contesting the *bhuinhari* case, you are not a tenant to my mind. I can get a higher rent for the *rajhas* from Ramjewan Kurmi or Bakshu Jolaha, so turn out and let me settle the land with a man after my own heart.' The reply would be, 'Decree or no decree, the land was brought under cultivation by my ancestors, the village is ours, and the country is ours, not yours. If compelled to do so, I will pay rent, but turn out I will not.' Then ensues the usual litigation, first in criminal, then in revenue and civil courts, to carry on which the demarcated bhuinhari is probably mortgaged or sold . . .

'In protracted litigation, intelligence, length of purse and influential position will, in the long run, carry the day. When an Illaquadar accepts a Bhuinhar as tenant for lands claimed as bhuinhari, but declared to be rajhas, even then disputes arise about the rate of rent. Where the ordinary rents are only demanded, the Bhuinhar is clearly in the wrong in declining to pay rent accordingly; but he almost invariably does so, contending, even in the face of a final decree, that the lands are bhuinhari still. In such cases he is deserving of no sympathy except for his pitiable ignorance; and decrees for ejectment would readily be given. But it often happens that there are two rates of rent in a village—the old customary rate paid by the native cultivators, and the contract rate paid, by new ryots settled on vacated lands by Illaquadars.' (Bengal Government resolution, dated 25 November 1880). Gov-

ernment in their resolution further noted, 'The Commissioner (Mr Hewitt) observes that a satisfactory solution of the land disputes still prevailing cannot be arrived at except by a thorough survey and settlement of the district. The Lieutenant Governor is not prepared at present to admit the necessity for this. The Government could not commit itself to so extensive and costly a measure without being fully satisfied that it is quite indispensable for the peace and good Government of the country, and that nothing short of it would secure that object.' It was really a consideration of the cost that deterred Government from undertaking expensive survey and settlement operations for all classes of lands in the district, for, in the same resolution, Government observed, 'It must be admitted that in regard to its effect on the relations between landlord and tenant, the success of the Act has fallen short of the expectations generally entertained on its introduction. The operations have not removed every cause of disagreement, and disputes are still of frequent occurrence.'

Up till the Bhuinhari settlement the disputes between landlords and tenants in the Munda country were mostly concerned with encroachments on the lands reclaimed by the tenants' ancestors and regarded as their Khuntkatti or Bhuinhari. With the registration of Bhuinhari tenures, disputes came to be concentrated about the right to possession of the non-bhuinhari lands and the rates of rent payable for them. The Zemindars or thikadars in many cases sought to take possession of such lands of the tenants as were not recorded as Bhuinhari and either hold it himself or settle them with Sadar or non-aboriginal raiyats or even subservient servant aboriginal raiyats brought in from other villages and in most cases sought to convert Korkar lands into ordinary raiyati lands. When he could not raise the customary rates of rent, he sought to increase his rent roll by manipulating the nominal standard of land measurement and describing in his papers as three powas what was formerly two powas of land, and demanding and where possible, realising rents accordingly. Although *beth begari* lands services were due only in respect of Bhuinhari held either rent free or on merely nominal rents, or from raiyats who held rent free *beth begari* lands, the landlords sought to exact services for rajhas lands as well. Constant friction between Chota Nagpur landlords and their aboriginal tenants culminated in what is known as the Sardar Larai of 1887 which has its centre in the Munda country. Thakur Indu Nath's son Thakur Narendra Nath was for a short time proprietor of the Jaria Estate and, on his death, his son Thakur Devendra Nath, father of the plaintiff, succeeded him. The ferment continued to seethe till it broke out in 1895 in the Birsaita risings which ended in armed revolution in 1899.

The high-handed attempts at spoliation of the tenants by Thakur Devendra Nath Sahi and his Thikadars will be seen from various judgments. Thus in a judgment, dated 26-7-1886 in

the case of Tilgu Thikadar against the fathers and uncles of some of the present tenants, the trying Magistrate declared the case as 'false and instituted out of grudge for depositing rents in treasury.' In a judgment dated 31 March 1887, in the case of Bhayaram Thikadar *versus* Monglu Munda, in which the thikadar claimed 6 kats of don as the landlord's manjihas, the Munsiff of Ranchi found the case was a false one brought with a view to extort enhanced rent from the defendant to whom the lands belonged and who to avoid payment of higher rent than was legally due deposited his rent in treasury. In the judgment dated 14-7-1890, Mr O'Brien, Joint Magistrate of Ranchi, in the case of Nathaniel, a servant of the landlord, *versus* Chamra Christian for cutting of trees claimed as belonging to the Zemindar found that the trees claimed on behalf of the landlord really belonged to the tenant and dismissed the case. In his judgment dated 25-2-1892, in the case of Thakur Devendra Nath *versus* Chamra Munda, the Munsiff of Ranchi dismissed the Thakur's claim for recovery of the value of trees cut down by the defendant from a plot which the Thakur claimed as his rakhat but which the court found to be a false claim as it was really the village Sarna or the sacred grove of the Munda village community. (In the civil suit No. 9 of 1893) which followed, the Sub-Judge of Ranchi in his judgment dated 3 June 1893, found that the jungles were not Thakur's 'rakhat' but that he had only maliki right and his claim for damages was disallowed. The Judicial Commissioner in appeal upheld on 21-5-1896 the Sub-Judge's finding.

The Birsa risings of 1895-1900 opened the eyes of Government to the seriousness of the agrarian situation caused by the encroachment of Zemindars on the rights of the aborigines and at long last, survey and settlement operations were undertaken in 1902. Although it was at first intended to be confined to the Munda country alone, in 1904 the Government of India sanctioned its extension to the whole district.

Special forms were prepared in the Village Notes for recording special customs connected with tenancies in the villages.

Towards the close of the settlement operations, a new Tenancy Act for Chota Nagpur was enacted, in which any custom, usage or customary right not inconsistent with the provisions of the Act was declared to remain unaffected and valid. Such a custom naturally would be the custom of non-enhancibility of rent in cases where it existed.

That non-enhancibility might be an incident of certain occupancy holdings is indicated by the use of the clause 'an occupancy raiyat whose rent is liable to enhancement, in the sections 26, 27 (a) and 27 (b) which deal with 'enhancement of rent.' The Government and the Legislature even thought fit to recognise the validity of a local custom against increase of rent for increase in area of a holding; and so, in the proviso to section 32 laid down that 'an

increase of rent shall not be ordered where it would contravene any local custom or usage prohibiting an increase of rent in respect of the increase in area of a holding.'

I have given so many lengthy quotations from official and other accounts (many more might be added) in order to support my contention that the tenancies of the old aboriginal tenants of a Munda Village have a special history which would justify their *raiya* lands being held at specially low rates, and that any enhancement of the existing rents in their case would be not only unfair and inequitable but against established local *custom*. That one of the *customs* which section 76 of the Chota Nagpur Act was intended to save is this *non-liability to enhancement of rents* is clearly indicated by certain passages in the *Report of the Administration of Bengal under Sir Andrew Fraser* for the years 1903-1908. At pages 60-63 of that report we read: 'For generations the aborigines of Chota Nagpur had been in a state of unrest owing to their inability to protect what they believe to be their rights in land. They enjoy special rights and privileges in respect of the lands cultivated by them, and these are recognised by the indigenous landlords. But for many years past these landlords had gradually been losing their estates to aliens, chiefly of the money-lender class, and the latter, when they came into possession, always endeavoured to break down the rights of the cultivators and to *enhance their rents*. The result was that there had been constant disputes between landlords and tenants, and, occasionally, armed risings of the latter

'At his first visit to Ranchi in September 1905, Sir Andrew Fraser made special enquiries regarding the progress of the settlement and the working of the laws abovementioned (*viz.*, Tenancy Laws). He found that through the ignorance of the courts, aided by the apathy of local officers until more recent years, injustice had been done to the Mundas by the agency of the law. The feeling created in the minds of many of them was one of great bitterness against the Government, whose failure to interfere on their behalf they had not been able to understand

'Special laws had been made, and an expensive settlement undertaken in order to check the mischief. But there was a danger of the former being rendered fruitless by the entire ignoring of it by officers trying suits between landlords and tenants and by their want of knowledge of the peculiar customs and tenures existing in Chota Nagpur

'The experience gained in the settlement made it clear that the local Tenancy Act failed in various important respects to take due account of the rights enjoyed by the aboriginal cultivators. A Bill to amend the Chota Nagpur landlord and Tenant Procedure Act, and the Chota Nagpur Commutation Act, was accordingly drafted and referred to a Select Committee, some of its provisions, however, were strongly objected to Select Committee, while the

reports of the Local Officers showed the necessity for further amendments not contemplated by the Bill, including . . . —a *Section Saving local Customs*—The absence of such a section in Act X of 1859 and Bengal Act I of 1879 had created great havoc among the rights of many raiyats, who were by custom entitled to hold at fixed rates, as pointed out by Mr Justice Field. Said, he, 'This Act (Act X of 1859) was not a complete Tenancy Act; it had no pretensions to be a Code of the mutual substantive rights of landlords and tenants yet it contained no saving clause, no provision that it was not intended to affect any custom or customary right not inconsistent with, or not expressly, or by necessary implication modified or abolished by its provisions. It was indeed said by the High Court in one case that the Act did not take away the right of any raiyat, who had a right by grant, contract, prescription or other valid title, to hold at a fixed rate of rent; but the principle of this observation was not understood throughout the country the Act was regarded as containing the whole law on the subject, with a portion of which it dealt; and—while it gave rights and protection to persons who had no other claim than that of having occupied land and paid rent for twelve years—by totally ignoring a large class, who had rights before and without the Act. It reduced to the same category old raiyats, *manrusi* or hereditary cultivators and new raiyats, *Ghair-manrusi* or non-hereditary tenants.' (Field's Landholding, pp. 772-773).

It was to remedy this defect and to afford to such raiyats entitled to hold at fixed rates as the aboriginal defendants in this case that S. 123 of the Bengal Tenancy Act and S. 76 of the present Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 (which was copied from the Bengal Tenancy Act) was enacted.

Accordingly the bill was redrafted, introduced in Council and passed into law in 1908, and section 76 was introduced to save local customs. That one of these customs intended to be saved was the non-liability to enhancement of the rent of a certain classes of aboriginal raiyats in respect of what are now their raiyati lands cannot be doubted. In more than one passage in this report, we have indications of such an intention. Thus in a later passage of the same report, we read:—'In Chota Nagpur the landlord is not the absolute owner of the land. The aboriginal raiyats enjoy special rights in respect of the enjoyment of forest produce, the clearing of waste, and the like. Their rents, also, are very low. The hereditary landlords acquiesce in their enjoyment of *these customary rights*. But when estates fall into the hands of aliens, the latter invariably claim full proprietary rights, and do all they can to *enhance the rents*. The cultivators are unable to hold their own in the law courts or to cope with the chicanery brought to bear against them. They give way for a time, but at last turn on their oppressors and on other foreigners. There have been repeated instances of this in the history of Chota-Nagpur, the last

being the Mundari rising of 1899-1900.'

This brief account of the origin and history of rent will show that neither the English theory of rent as *redditus* or 'compensation for lands demised' (Woodfall), nor the proportion theory of the Permanent Settlement Regulation of Bengal can have any application to 'rent' in Chota-Nagpur.

The history of land tenures and rent in Ranchi District and particularly in Pargana Sonepur and the villages in question shows that what is now called 'rent' originated in voluntary nominal contributions in the nature of tribute which the Munda peasant-proprietors paid to the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur. As Sir James Sifton wrote in the Supplement (p.) to the last Settlement Report, 'The history of the rent in every village is a history of struggle between landlord and raiyats. The landlords are mostly middlemen introduced between the Zemindar and the raiyats, who have proceeded after their introduction to exploit the villages and their tenantry. The great differences between the incidence of rent from village to village are principally due to the good or ill success of the exploitation. The low rental of a village generally indicates that it is an old Bhuinhari village and that the old raiyats have maintained their Khuntkatti rights, and successfully resisted the landlord's encroachment.' This is why we find that in most of the villages of the Sonepur Pargana the rate of rent for *Rajhas don* is one rupee *per kat*, and of *Korkor* half of that rate or less, whereas in most other Parganas, the rent is very much higher. The tenants of the villages in question and of most villages in the Torpa and Khunti thanas have successfully maintained a few remnants of their ancient Khuntkatti rights,—one of which is fixity of rent, and another is the right to extend their *Don* lands by reclaiming waste lands on its borders and converting their *Tanr* lands into *Don*, without payment of additional rent.

The rent-history of the Pargana, and the villages in question, shows that the 'rent' payable by the aboriginal defendants is neither 'competition rent' as in England, nor 'produce-proportion rent' as in other parts of India, but stands as a class apart which may be more appropriately termed 'tribute rent.' 'Rent' in their case is not a 'return' or compensation paid to the landlord for the use of lands belonging to the landlord and based to the tenant. Their lands were not settled with them by the landlords but reclaimed by them by virtue of ancient customary right. The later theory of rent as a 'proportion of the produce,' or its money value, can have no application to the case of these tenancies.

This right to fixity of rent was saved by sec. 76 of the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, and is referred in sections 26, 27 and 32 of the Act.

We have seen that though, in the beginning, this 'tribute rent' was either voluntarily or forcibly raised to a certain extent, after years of struggle it came to be stabilised and, as a result of express

or implied compromise, came to be permanently fixed over 60 years ago at Re. 1 *per kat* of *Rajhas Don*, whereas *Korkor* lands retained something of their old Khuntkatti or Bhuinhari incidents. Ever since then, although various aggressions have been made by landlords on the rights of the aboriginal tenants, in these villages no attempt was made to enhance the rates as they were hitherto considered inviolable. Though aggressions were made against other surviving rights of the aboriginal tenants, both through the Courts and out of Court, and even some indirect and subtle methods were employed to increase the rent-roll of the landlords, the rates were not directly touched as they were regarded as sacrosanct.

This fixity of rate which the aboriginal tenants have so long enjoyed is almost the only surviving relic of an originally superior status. Will the courts now help the landlord to crush out and extinguish this only surviving right—a right to which the tenants have persistently clung from the beginning of their degradation from peasant proprietors into raiyats, from land-owners to land-serfs, and which hitherto most landlords have recognised and respected?

The fact that a few landlords, generally more unscrupulous and tyrannical than their fellows, have succeeded in illegally enhancing the customary rents or realising from their raiyats *abwabs* or their value in addition to the customary rate of one rupee per Kat can be no valid ground for penalising the raiyats of the much larger number of villages who have successfully resisted such attempts, open or veiled and insidious, on the part of their landlords. If, in equity, no man is allowed to take advantage of his own wrong, much less should a landlord be allowed to take advantage of a third party's wrong to that party's own tenants and claim for himself the right to emulate the wrong-doer and convert what was considered wrong in the case of his neighbour into right in his own case. No court will permit one wrong to be justified by another. If the rates of rent of aboriginal tenants in the Munda country are found not liable to enhancement, either legally or equitably, the fact that some enhancements have been effected in the past in defiance of custom and equity, or, in the case of certain assessments by the revenue courts, in ignorance of the custom,—that will not warrant, much less justify, an enhancement in the present cases.

'Usage' is custom in its formative stage. All that is required in proving 'usage' is that it should be definite, continuous and uniform. And the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act has even declared 'usage' to be valid and binding. In Sonapur Pargana not only has a definite and reasonable usage of payment by the Munda tenants of rent at the rate of one rupee per *Kat* of *rajhas don* with unlimited rent-free *tanr* and half or quarter of that rate for *Korkor don* been proved, but an ancient custom of non-enhancibility, has been established by the evidence of reliable witnesses, reliable

public documents like 'village notes' and the authoritative decisions of courts. And so sec. 76 of the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act will be a bar to any enhancement of the rates of rent of these defendants. This usage or custom, as I have said, was recorded at the last survey and settlement in the Village Notes of almost all the villages of the Pargana. If there be a few aberrations or exceptions, such exceptions only prove the rule. The judgment of Mr Inglis in 1908 in the assessment suit brought by the Manager of the Jeria Estate against the raiyats of villages Paira and Tirla is a very strong piece of evidence which proves the custom.

The rent history of the pargana shows that, in time, good sense (perhaps a dawning sense of humanity) and self-interest, more than anything else, cried halt to the landlords' frantic course of self-aggrandizement at the cost of the reclaimers of the soil. The long years of struggle between the unsatiable greed of the landlords and the unyielding resistance of the Munda reclaimers and cultivators of land at length evolved the present rates of rate. From an usage in the past it has ripened into a custom, definite, continuous and uniform. Thus, the existing rates of rent are the outcome of a necessary compromise in the past, the result not of express contract but of necessary usage ripening into an inviolable custom. This compromise—though in most cases implied rather than express—was gradually, though perhaps unconsciously, forced upon the parties by the circumstances of the struggle. Ever since then it has been regarded as binding, and continuously followed. It served to set at rest the age-long conflict between might and right. Will a mightier power—a court of justice—now set at naught the fixity of rates which Munda cultivators bought with the life-blood of generations of their ancestors?

NOTES ON TRIBAL JUSTICE AMONG THE APA TANIS

BY C. AND E. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

THE Apa Tanis, whose system of agriculture has been described in a recent article in *Man in India*,¹ are a tribe some 20,000 strong inhabiting a single broad valley in the Subansiri region of the Assam Himalayas. They are clearly distinguished from the neighbouring Daffa and Miri tribes and in the isolation of their highland home, separated from the plains of Assam by a broad belt of difficult and rugged country, they have evolved a social order which is without parallel among the Himalayan tribes north of the Brahmaputra. The Apa Tanis have a very marked tribal consciousness, a great pride in their distinct culture and way of living, and a passionate attachment to their homeland, which they have turned from a marshy swamp into a carefully tended garden and which they jealously guard against encroachments by warlike neighbours.

Though this feeling of tribal solidarity is not always strong enough to unite the whole tribe in the face of minor quarrels and feuds with Daffas or Miris, it finds expression in the unquestioning acceptance of certain norms of social conduct and tribal justice according to which quarrels between Apa Tanis must be settled in a way altogether different from the course followed in disputes between Apa Tanis and other tribes. For the Apa Tanis, living in crowded villages of several hundred houses and concentrated in a small area with a population of about one thousand per square mile, must abide by fairly strict rules of behaviour if quarrels and strife are not to disrupt the harmony of the whole community. The practice of their Daffa neighbours to right a real or an imagined wrong by raiding and sometimes wiping out whole settlements would spell the doom of a prosperity based on an elaborately organized economy and lead to chaos which would soon affect the entire population of the valley. Private disputes are therefore never allowed to go beyond a definite limit and as soon as a quarrel threatens to become the cause of serious dissension within the village, or the tribe it is for the recognized leaders of the various sections of the community first to mediate and later if necessary to take such action as may be necessary to restore the disturbed social equilibrium.

Apa Tani society is divided into two endogamous classes, the *mite* or patricians and the *mura* or plebeians and slaves.² This division is unalterable and neither wealth, wisdom nor prowess in war can enable a man to rise from the *mura* class to that of the patricians. According to Apa Tani tradition all *mura* were originally the slaves of the *mite* freemen, but today this position is often obscured by the wealth and personal influence of individual

1) C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Agriculture and Land Tenure among the Apa Tanis,' *Man in India*, Vol. XXVI, 1946, No. 1.

2) Synonymous terms for *mite* and *mura* are *gute* and *guchi*.

mura, some of whom have gained a certain prominence through the newly established trade with Assam in which to engage the more conservative patricians consider beneath their dignity. Yet the innate superiority of the *mite* is never questioned, inter-marriage between the two classes is not countenanced and every *mura* stands still in a relationship of dependence to a certain patrician family which involves certain obligations on ceremonial occasions.

Besides this horizontal division of Apa Tani society into patricians and plebeians, there is the more obvious vertical division into seven villages, ranging in size from 160 to over a thousand houses, into 'quarters' (which in accordance with the terminology of the Naga Hills we may call 'khels'), each with a ritual centre or *nago*-shrine, and into clans. The loyalty to the 'khel' is sometimes stronger than the loyalty to the village, for the Apa Tani knows no more important political tie than that between the clans using the same *nago* as their ritual centre. The visual symbol of the social cohesion of the individual clan (or sometimes of two or three closely related clans) is the *lapang*, an assembly platform built of enormous wooden boards and fulfilling all the functions of a megalithic meeting place. It is on these *lapang* that the clan members meet and councils are held, it is below the *lapang* that criminals are tied up and it is on the *lapang* that after an execution the ritual weapons of the executioners are displayed.

The representatives of the clans, who in their plurality constitute a kind of village government, are the *buliang*, men of character and ability, who are appointed either from among the members of a family which owing to its wealth and status furnishes always one or two *buliang* or on account of their personal influence in the community. There are three types of *buliang*: the *akha buliang*, old men past the time when they can take a very active part in village affairs, but with whom rests the ultimate decision in all important matters; the *yapa buliang*, middle aged men who carry on negotiations and sit in the village councils and who keep the *akha buliang* informed of developments and place agreed settlements of disputes before them for sanction; and finally the *ajang buliang*, young men who are employed as messengers and assistants of the *yapa buliang*, and act as the leaders of the younger generation. In practice this division of duties is not always clear cut, and some of the older *ajang buliang* assume gradually the functions of *yapa buliang*. But normally a *yapa buliang* does not become an *akha buliang* until the death of the *akha buliang* representing his clan or group of clans. The *akha buliang* appoint the *ajang buliang* from amongst the ranks of the eligible young men, and in this selection they do not necessarily give preference to members of their own clan but see to it that their clan group is represented by men of talent and efficiency.

The *buliang* are rewarded for their services to the community by ceremonial gifts of beer and meat on the occasion of village

feasts and during an annual festival celebrated by the whole tribe every *buliang* receives gifts from his opposite number in the village standing in a relationship of ceremonial reciprocity with his own village or quarter.

Though the *buliang* are the arbiters of tribal law and the upholders of tribal justice they are primarily the spokesmen of their own clan or clan-group and not village-headmen with absolute authority. Their duties are not those of a police and they do not take action unless a dispute has become a public issue which must be dealt with by the community as a whole, be it by mediation or by the use of force. The Apa Tani is for all his social sense a great individualist and if he is wronged by a fellow tribesman his first reaction is not to appeal to the *buliang*, but to retrieve his loss or vindicate his honour by taking the law into his own hands. As a rule it is only when a quarrel has dragged on or when it begins to undermine the peace of the whole community that the *buliang* enter the field of action.

Astonishing as it may seem to the outsider, the Apa Tanis are in no way perturbed if two villagers fight out a quarrel over the possession of land or mithan or over the unfaithfulness of a wife or husband, by attaching each other's property or even capturing each other's children or relatives. More than once have we seen houses fenced in with high bamboo palisades in which the owner held a co-villager imprisoned and it is no unusual thing to kidnap a defaulting debtor or a troublesome relative and guard against his escape by putting his foot into a heavy log. A few examples will demonstrate this system of private enforcement of the law, and make it obvious that the underlying idea is not the punishment of an offender but the realization of a claim or the extraction of compensation under pressure.

In Kach, a sub-settlement of Hang village, we once saw a house surrounded by a bamboo fence, higher than its roof, without any entrance in front. The only opening in the palisade was at the back of the house, so high that to enter one had to climb up a ladder outside and down a ladder inside. A platform, a good deal higher than the house gable, was erected above the back veranda and seemed to serve as a kind of sentry-box. When we asked for the reason of these 'fortifications,' we were told that a prisoner was kept in the house. The prisoner, as Ponyo Tamo, the owner of the house, explained, was his own son-in-law, Tapi Pusang, who had been seized him on account of the bad treatment of his wife, Ponyo Tamo's daughter. Many years ago Tapi Pusang had married a sister's daughter of Ponyo Tamo, but divorced her after a short time. Then he married Ponyo Tamo's daughter Sante, paying one mithan cow as brideprice. Though the marriage remained childless, Pusang and Sante lived together for about ten years. But some time ago Pusang had grown tired of his wife and had told her to leave his house. Several times he drove her

away, as it seems with the intention of marrying another wife. Sante, however, was not willing to leave him and returned to him again and again. Some seven months ago Pusang had come to Tamo's house and told him to take his daughter back. Tamo refused and when he failed to persuade Pusang to agree to a reconciliation, he seized him and tied him up with a heavy log on his foot. To prevent his flight or rescue he surrounded the house with a palisade and erected a platform from which he or another man of his household kept watch every night.

Tamo said that he would release Pusang if he either consented to take his wife back or paid a ransom of one hundred mithan-values¹ to atone for the insult to Tamo's family. For the last seven months Tamo, with his whole family including his daughter Sante and her imprisoned husband Pusang had been living in the fenced-in house, and Pusang was at that time still determined neither to take back his wife nor to pay the ransom.

But when we revisited Kach a year later the fence had been removed from Tamo's house, and we were told that Pusang's clansmen had ransomed him by paying to Tamo forty mithan-values as compensation. The parties were reconciled, but Pusang and Sante had finally separated. In the negotiations leading to the release the *buliang* of Hang village played no doubt an important part, but it is significant that for many months they took no action to prevent the imprisonment of one fellow-villager by the other. Their attitude had been that the quarrel concerned only the two families, and since it did not disturb the general peace of the village their intervention was not called for until the parties approached them with the request to effect a settlement.

Rather different were the circumstances which led another Apa Tani to transform his house into a fortress. In the main-street of Reru, a 'khel' of Bela village, we found a house surrounded by a firm bamboo-palisade and were told that the owner Nani Jile was there living in what amounted to self-inflicted confinement. He had quarrelled with his father's brother over the possession of certain rice-fields, and in the course of the dispute had captured his cousin's wife and kept her for a month with a log on her foot in his house. To effect her release her husband paid a ransom of five mithan-cows and five mithan-calves, but Nani Jile still did not set her free and in the end the husband with some friends forced their way into Jile's house and rescued the woman. Nani Jile was sure that his cousin would take the next opportunity for revenge and capture him or a member of his family. To provide against such a fate he fortified his house, and for the last five months neither he, his wife nor his children had left the narrow space enclosed by the palisade. From their veranda they could see out through the fence into the village-street and chat with

¹ Mithan-value is the unit in which prices are expressed, one full-grown mithan cow counts as about five mithan-values.

passers by, and their friends and relatives were, of course, free to climb over the carefully guarded palisade and keep them company inside the house. But only Jile's two slaves ever went out, and it was they who fetched water and brought in foodstuff provided by Jile's relations-in-law. The latter helped the slaves also in the cultivation of Jile's fields, but Jile and his wife and children were debarred from any productive work.

After some months, however, Jile relaxed his precautions, and when about half a year later we came again to Reru, the fence round Jile's house had been removed and another house across the street was fenced-in. It was his cousin's house and Jile himself was kept in it as a prisoner. Soon after he had dropped his vigilance and ventured out of his house, his cousin, still smarting under the insult heaped on him and his wife had captured Jile and refused to set him free until Jile's relatives had paid him full compensation for the loss of mithan and prestige which he had suffered through Jile's capture of his wife. When I finally left the Apa Tani valley the dispute, which had lasted for nearly two years, had not come to an end, but I have little doubt that Jile was ultimately ransomed and the cousins reached some kind of agreement which freed them from the fear of being captured and imprisoned.

In this case too the *buliang* took no action and the general attitude of the villagers was indeed that the quarrel of the two cousins did not concern anybody but themselves and their nearest relatives.

While the capture of one's opponent is a favourite and usually fairly effective means of pressing a claim, it is employed mainly in what we might call 'civil' disputes. If an Apa Tani of wealth and good social status thinks his honour at stake, he resorts to a very different procedure to vindicate himself and humiliate his enemy. This procedure known as *lisudu* involves the ritual destruction of wealth and recalls in that respect the *potlach* rites of the North-west Americans. A man who challenges a co-villager to a *lisudu* competition starts by killing one or several of his mithan in front of his opponent's house, leaving the meat for the other villagers to eat. Sometimes he adds to the holocaust valuables, such as Tibetan bells, bronze plates and swords. If his opponent accepts the challenge he must slaughter at least the same number of mithan and destroy property of equal value in front of the challenger's house. The next move is for the latter to kill an even greater number of mithan and this number must again be matched by his rival. The competition may go on until both parties are nearly ruined, but in theory the man who can continue the longer with this destruction of property wins thereby his opponent's entire property in land and movable possessions. But I have heard of no concrete example of a *lisudu* which was carried as far as the utter defeat of one of the competitors; usually the *buliang* intervene and negotiate a settlement which spares both parties the humiliation of defeat. The following incident in Hang village is a fairly

typical example of a *lisudu* :

A Dafla, Licha Seke, had come to live in Hang and stayed in the House of Taj Toko, a freed slave of Ponyo Tamar, the richest and one of the most influential men of Hang. Now Licha Seke had some years previously taken part in the capture of a mithan belonging to Belo Lampung, another prominent man of Hang. But the matter seemed forgotten and for a full year Licha Seke lived in Hang without being molested. Then one day when he was going to cut fire-wood Belo Lampung captured him and kept him for one night in his house. Ponyo Tamar considered the capture of a man who was living in his slave's house an insult to himself, and offered Belo Lampung five mithan as ransom for Licha Seke. But Lampung said that nothing but Seke's death would satisfy him. Next morning he and his clansmen took Licha Seke to the public execution place on the bank of a stream, beheaded him and then cut the body into pieces and threw them into the water.

Ponyo Tamar, enraged by the killing of his slave's guest, seized two cows belonging to Belo Lampung and slaughtered both cows close to his house. Lampung was apparently not keen on continuing the quarrel with the rich and influential Ponyo Tamar, and ignored the killing of his cattle. But Ponyo Tamar, deeply wounded by the insult to his house and anxious to preserve his prestige, was out for a fight and forestalled any action on Lampung's part by challenging him to a *lisudu*. He began the competition by slaughtering in front of Lampung's house three mithan-cows and smashing one Tibetan bell, one bronze-plate and one sword. Lampung retaliated by killing in front of Tamar's house four large mithan, but he did not destroy any other property. Next Tamar killed ten mithan and Lampung answered by killing twenty. The following day Tamar slaughtered thirty mithan, and Lampung, far from admitting defeat, collected sixty mithan and killed them in a single day. Thereupon Tamar called upon all his kinsmen and gathered eighty mithan. He was prepared to slaughter them, but the *buliang* intervened and persuaded him to kill only sixty, thereby matching Lampung's last bid without outstripping him. A settlement was achieved on the basis that the *lisudu* ended undecided, and Lampung agreed to pay to Tamar a fine of one mithan-cow for killing a man who had stayed in the house of one of Tamar's dependents.

We note that in this case Tamar had no material claim against Lampung, and had suffered no loss in property. But his honour as one the leading men of the village had been attacked, and he resorted to the *lisudu* to re-establish his prestige.

Where personal honour is at stake Apa Tanis as extremely sensitive and even among near relations questions of prestige may lead to serious and long drawn-out disputes. In Haja village two brothers, Kimle Tara and Kimle Dūbo quarrelled over the possession of the housesite of one of their deceased dependents who had

died without heirs. In the normal course of events the property of a dependent without heirs reverts to the master or masters, and in so far as the cultivated land was concerned the two brothers had agreed on its disposal. But as the housesite was near Tara's house, he claimed it for himself. Dūbo, however, felt that by ignoring his legitimate claim to a fair share, his brother had slighted his honour and he started a *lisudu* by slaughtering four mithan at the Kimle *lapang*; next day Tara killed five mithan, which was followed by Dūbo killing ten, Tara twelve, and Dūbo twelve; there negotiations might have settled the matter, but Dūbo, insistent on vindicating his honour, slaughtered ten more mithan on the day after he had slaughtered twelve and Tara replied by killing another ten. Here the clansmen intervened and the *buliang* negotiated a settlement whereby the housesite as well as the lands of the deceased dependent were to be divided between the brothers.

The animals slaughtered at a *lisudu* are not always those of the competitors. It is customary for the kinsmen, both maternal and paternal, to show their group solidarity by lending the animals required, even when there is little chance of early repayment. It is therefore understandable that sooner or later the competitors' kinsmen persuade the *buliang* to intervene and prevent too great a destruction of property. Yet there remains the idea that the more wealth a man can destroy the higher rises his social prestige. The very fact of the support given by numerous kinsmen is proof of his importance and influence within a large social group. But since the pursuance of a *lisudu* to its logical conclusion might spell the economic ruin of a whole group of families, the *buliang* usually intervene in favour of a compromise.

Whereas it would seem that the *lisudu* is the recognized means by which a man can vindicate his personal honour slighted by a fellow villager, disputes between members of different villages may ultimately result in a ceremonial and prearranged fight, a *gambu sodu*. In such a case the partisans of an aggrieved man challenge the supporters of his opponent to an open fight, and on the day and time fixed for the combat the men of both parties line up and fight armed with spears, bows and arrows and sometimes even with *dao*. The men whose dispute is the direct cause of the *gambu* do not generally take part, but they are responsible for marshalling their partisans, and they must pay compensation for those falling in the fray. It is argued that they are not permitted to risk their lives in the fight, because if they were killed there would remain nobody to pay compensation to men wounded or to the relatives of men, who fell in the fray. The actual combat is governed by various rules and conventions, and there is no intention to inflict heavy losses on either side. As soon as there is a fatal casualty or two on either side the *gambu* is usually called off; it seems that no permanent enmity results from these prearranged fights and it may be argued that they serve as a kind of safety

valve through which pent-up ill-feeling between groups may be discharged with a minimum of harm to the tribal community as a whole. While in the heat of the fight some damage may be done to gardens and bamboo groves, there is never any large scale destruction of houses and granaries, as in the raids of the Daffas, and the fight is more or less ordered and confined to long-distance arrow shooting and spear throwing, with perhaps an occasional thrust into the opposing line with drawn swords. We have never heard of a *gambu* which ended in a general *melee* where men fought with swords and knives for their lives.

A few examples will demonstrate the type of quarrels that can lead to such prearranged fights :

About five years ago Haja raided the Daffa village of Linia, and a Hari warrior who had joined the raiding party was killed in the fighting by a Daffa of the attacked village. A year later Linia men came to buy rice in Bela, the Apa Tani village nearest to Hari, and the killed man's brother, Hage Sa, hearing of their arrival ambushed them as they were returning and killed one man and one woman. The people of Bela were exceedingly angry at the attack on their trade partners, particularly because it was committed on Bela territory, and they demanded that Hage Sa should pay compensation to Linia. When Hage Sa refused, two "khels" of Bela declared a *gambu* against Hage Sa, who took up the challenge and was supported by his village. On the day arranged, the men of Bela and Hari lined up on an open field midway between the two villages. Numbers were fairly equal and the parties attacked each other with arrows and spears, sometimes sallying forth to thrust at an opponent with swords, while the women brought up reinforcements in the shape of new bamboo spears. Many were wounded but after two on each side had been killed the *gambu* was broken off; there was no formal peacemaking, but the dispute was considered settled and both villages resumed friendly relations.

Another *gambu* in which Hari was recently involved, resulted also from the interference of one Apa Tani village with the Daffa friends and traditional trade partners of another. The events leading up to the fight are rather involved. Two Apa Tani friends, Takhe Tagang of Hang and Tasso Sili of Hari went to Bua, a Daffa-Miri village two days journey from Hari, to purchase cotton. On their return journey they were captured by Daffas of the Hidjat Lupukher area. Takhe Tagang was kept in stocks at Hidjat and Tasso Sili was sent across the Khru River to another village. From there he escaped and made his way home, but Takhe Tagang had to be ransomed by his friends of Hang, who employed an influential Daffa of Licha village as go-between and negotiator.

After his return, Takhe Tagang blamed his friends and trade-partners of Bua for having made no efforts at effecting his release, and that he had been captured on the way from their village to

Hang. So when he heard that some women of Bua were coming on a visit to Hari to attend the Mloko festival, he and some other Hang men ambushed the two women and took them to Hang.

Both women were kept in stocks and when the Hari men demanded their release, Hang refused. At that Hari challenged Hang to a *gambu* and the Hang men replied that they would fight, 'shoot arrow for arrow, hurl spear for spear, and cut sword for sword.' Hari gained the support of the villages of Bela, Mudang Tage and Michi Bamin, whose hunting and grazing grounds adjoin those of Bua and who all had at that time pacts of friendship with Bua.

On the day fixed for the *gambu*, the warriors of these four villages marched to Hang, and formed a long line on the fields in front of the village. The men of Hang were furious about this challenge and in their anger took one of the captive women to a *nago*, killed her and burnt the body. Then they came out to fight.

The battle raged for some time inconclusively, watched by crowds of warriors from the neutral villages of Haja and Duta. Just when the men of Hari and their allies were on the point of pushing the Hang men back into their own village, and of entering the labyrinth of streets, the rumour spread that the son of Hang's richest and most influential man, Ponyo Tamar, had been mortally wounded. The news sobered the Hari men, who realized the seriousness of such an incident, and they withdrew from the fight. The rumour was false however and the boy, though hit in the chest by an arrow, escaped with his life. On Hari's side two men had been wounded, but there were no fatal casualties on either side.

Two months after the *gambu* the surviving Bua woman was ransomed by her husband, but there were no formal peace negotiations between Hari and Hang, and normal relations were resumed gradually, the *gambu* being considered sufficient revenge for the insult suffered by the Hari men through the capture and subsequent murder of their guests.

Another *gambu* was fought by Hang on account of a boundary dispute with the small village of Michi Bamin. The latter was supported by Mudang Tage village and the two parties lined up on opposite banks of the Kele River, and shot at each other with arrows. One man on each side was killed and as a result Michi Bamin, though hardly one-fifth as populous as Hang, retained its right on the disputed land.

Whereas a *lisudu* is as a rule the ultimate outcome of a civil dispute between equals, and the *gambu* is the last resort for ending tension between two village communities, which for one or the other reason could not be resolved by the ordinary ways of arbitration, neither of them fall within the sphere of tribal justice whereby offenders against the accepted moral standards and the common interest of the community are brought to book by public action. Such tribal justice in the narrower sense of the word

comes into operation when the anti-social or criminal acts arouse the anger of the community and the leading men confer and decide to punish the offender.

In a society where wealth is held in such high esteem as among the Apa Tanis crimes violating rights in property are considered extremely serious, and the punishment for habitual theft is death. A first offender will not be dealt with as severely, but may be tied up for some days beside a *lapang*, being both uncomfortable—with his leg fastened in a heavy log of wood—and exposed to ridicule. Subsequent offences may be expiated by the payment of compensation, but if a person habitually steals the *buliang* may take more drastic steps to end the public nuisance and may even inflict the death penalty. Such action is usually backed by public opinion, though if the thief belongs to a respectable family his immediate relatives and his clansmen may put up a show of indignation and even talk of reprisals.

But most of the thieves who pay for their offences with their lives are members of slave clans, and there is usually no one to take their part and attempt to save them from their fate. Indeed their own masters, who normally would act as their protectors, may be their chief prosecutors, having already been called upon to atone for their misdeeds.

Executions of thieves are comparatively rare events, and only one occurred during the time we spent in or near the Apa Tani country. But we were told of several cases which give an adequate idea of the circumstances under which a thief may be put to death.

Ponyo Yepu was a young unmarried slave girl belonging to Ponyo Hakhe, a respectable citizen of Hang. She was unruly and often left her master's houses and went to stay in other houses. Ponyo Hakhe made no particular effort to detain her, for she was useless as a worker and had a reputation for petty theft. Once she went to Mai, a neighbouring Daffa village, which is often visited by Apa Tani who weave cloth for the Daffas for wages. In Mai Yepu also began to steal, and when her master heard of her disgraceful conduct in a foreign village, he became extremely angry and, fearing no doubt that the thieving of his slave might bring him into conflict with some of his Daffa neighbours, he went with his son Ekha to bring her back. Ekha captured her in the forest near Mai. Ponyo Hakhe, Ponyo Tamar and other important men took her straight to Khogo, the public execution place near the Kele River, and Hakhe beheaded her. Then they cut her body into pieces and threw them into the river. No part of the corpse was taken to the village and no ceremony was performed afterwards.

Very similar was the fate of another slave girl of Hang, Ponyo Rali. She was unmarried, very young and utterly irresponsible. She strayed from her master's house, living now in this and now in that house, and had casual sex-relations with numerous young men. While her promiscuous habits would have

been a matter of indifference to the other villagers, her stealing of rice, fowls, and beads caused general annoyance. When one day she was caught red handed in the house of Tabin Koda, her master, Ponyo Kara, made up his mind to inflict on her the customary punishment for habitual theft. His son-in-law seized her and she was tied up at the Ponyo *lapang*. The important clansmen gathered and resolved that she should die. Her master's slaves dragged her to the execution place and the *buliang* and clan elders followed. At the execution place she was killed, not by one man, but by all those present, who hacked up her body and threw it into the river with all her clothes and ornaments. Subsequently a nominal *rope*-ceremony was performed at the *nago*, because she had—like a captive enemy—been kept tied up at the *lapang*.

Rather different from these two executions, which amounted to no more than the riddance of the community from a public nuisance, was the killing of Chigi Duyu, the member of a patrician family of Duta. Chigi Duyu had had his hand in several doubtful cattle deals, and was finally found in the possession of a cow stolen from Hang. I was told that he had been known as a thief for years; he had stolen cows and mithan belonging to Apa Tanis, slaughtered them in the forest and sold the meat to Daffas and conversely he had sold the meat of stolen Daffa cattle in Apa Tani villages. Thereby he became a menace to the peace between the two tribes, and a cause of dissension among the Apa Tanis themselves. When at last he was caught selling a cow, undoubtedly stolen from a man of Hibu clan of Hang, the prominent men of Hang held council and decided to enlist the support of the *buliang* of other villages in dealing with the offender. They went from village to village and the case was debated first on the assembly platforms of Hang, then on those of Hari and Bela, and finally on the *lapang* of Haja and Michi Bamin.

Thus practically all prominent Apa Tanis were aware of the contemplated action and had agreed to the capture and killing of Chigi Duyu. Only his own co-villagers seem to have been excluded from these discussions, no hint or rumour of which reached the intended victim.

Shortly before the Morum Festival, an annual rite when all the seven Apa Tani villages strengthen their ties of friendship by reciprocal gifts and the exchange of formal visits, several prominent men of Bela and Hang surprised Chigi Duyu on a *lapang* of Mudang Tage, the village adjoining Duta, and in full view of his friends dragged him off to Hang no one intervened in his favour. Chigi Duyu was taken to Hang and tied up at the Taliang *lapang*.

Two days later the Duta men, led by Chigi Nime, famous priest, seer and *akha buliang*, went in solemn procession on their annual visit of goodwill to Hang. There they found, much to their embarrassment, Chigi Duyu, with his leg in a log, tied to a *lapang*. Chigi Nime offered to pay four mithan for Duyu's release, and after

some negotiations Hibu Tarin, whose cow had been stolen by Chigi Duyu and who acted therefore as the main captor, agreed to the deal. But the other captors, and particularly the *buliang* of Bela village would not consent to the ransom or reprieve of Chigi Duyu.

While kept tied to the *lapang* he was given rice and beer, but realizing no doubt his desperate situation, he ate little and did not say much to his captors. When the hour of his execution had come, Padi Chiliang, one of the most prominent Bela men, and a few other important men of Bela and Hang, told him that on account of his thieving habits he must die; it was his own fault and he should bear them no grudge. Then they cut off a hand 'with which he had stolen,' slashed him over the eyes 'with which he had spied on other men's cattle' and over the mouth 'with which he had eaten stolen goods.' In a few moments he was dead. The men of Bela took one of his hands to their village and kept it in their *nago*, and the rest of the body was burnt in Hang close to the Nich *nago*.

On the day of the execution we returned to Duta from a short tour in the Dafla country, but as the Morum Festival was in full swing in both Haja and Duta we noticed nothing unusual. Three days after the execution Chigi Duyu's relatives held the funeral rites with chanting and wailing. As they had been unable to recover any part of the body, they buried Chigi Duyu's cloth, ornaments and hat close to his house and erected above this "grave" a single bamboo to which they fastened the carcass of a fowl. We were told that the reason for erecting the cenotaph of a man murdered or otherwise killed near his house instead of on the common burial ground, was the wish to keep alive the wrath of the deceased's kinsmen.

That same night Chigi Nime came to tell us his version of the incident. Without denying Chigi Duyu's guilt, he complained bitterly that the Hang men had not accepted the offered ransom, and in his first indignation he insisted that Duyu's kinsmen would not be content until they had taken the life of one of the executioners—omens would decide which one. But this would not disturb the general peace: they would quietly enter the chosen victim's house and allow his wife and children to leave it; then they would kill their man and none of the other villagers would interfere.

However no one took Chigi Nime's initial indignation very seriously and we heard of no retribution against the men who killed Chigi Duyu. Even Chigi Nime admitted that the execution would not be considered as a break of the *dapo* (treaty of friendship) between Duta and Hang. 'Only owing to the existence of this *dapo* can we live in peace,' he said, 'without it no one would be sure of his life or his property.'

While the murder or even the capture of a member of a friendly village is usually taken as a breach of the *dapo* between the villages concerned, the execution of Chigi Duyu was obviously considered a very different matter, and even his kinsmen could not seriously deny that the executioners had acted within the limits

of tribal custom. When seven days after the execution we went to Hang we found on the Taliang *lapang* where Chigi Duyu had been killed, a pile of shields and spears. They remained there until two days later when Hang performed the *rope*-ceremony. At this rite a mithan, the price of which had been raised by public subscription, was sacrificed, and all the men danced with shields and spears as we had seen them do during the full rites at the disposal of the hand of a slain enemy.

The Apa Tanis, who live in crowded villages in a strictly limited area must have a fairly severe code of justice, and criminals must be drastically dealt with if serious disorder is to be avoided. As the Apa Tanis have no prisons or other means of segregating bad characters, the death sentence is the only effective means of eliminating a disturbing element. Banishment from the tribal territory might be an alternative solution, but this expedient is not free from danger, for an Apa Tani with a tendency to crime may either involve his home village in a dispute with the Dafla or Miri village in which he finds refuge, or turning renegade he may put his knowledge of Apa Tani country and grazing grounds into the service of hostile raiding parties, and thereby take his revenge on his own tribesmen.

However, we have heard of one concrete case when an Apa Tani sold a troublesome slave to Daflas, but public opinion is not much in favour of such deals; because there is the strong feeling that Apa Tani slaves should not be disposed of outside the tribe, not even as punishment for criminal offences. When some years ago Michi Pilia sold a boy of slave class, Duli Pilia, to a Dafla of Mai, his action was followed by endless litigation, and was obviously not regarded as a legitimate way of dealing with a youthful thief. Duli Pilia was the son of a woman married to one of Michi Pilia's freed slaves; at an early age he developed the habit of stealing rice from granaries, and Michi Pilia had repeatedly to pay compensation. Tired of being held responsible for his slave's misdeeds, he sold the boy, then little more than twelve years old, to Mai Höli, the headman of the Dafla village of Mai. The boy's maternal kinsmen, who live in Bela village, objected violently to this transaction, and one of them, Tage Kago, captured the man who had acted as go-between in the negotiations which had preceded the sale. To ransom his friend, Michi Pilia had to pay five mithan, but he soon retaliated by capturing not Tage Kago himself, but his patron Milo Rayo, a man of patrician family. Milo Rayo too was ransomed by his kinsmen, who had to pay twelve mithan to Michi Pilia. But as everybody, and particularly Michi Pilia, was tired of the quarrel, the parties agreed to bury the dispute by concluding a *pai* pact, i.e., a pact of friendship such as arranged between individuals in a way similar to the conclusion of a *dapo*-treaty between villages. To seal this pact Michi Pilia slaughtered one mithan and paid to Milo Rayo seven mithan and various valuables.

The slave-boy remained with Mai Höli, where he seems to have given no more trouble, but in May 1945 he was captured by an Apa Tani of Hang who had a private quarrel with Mai Höli and seized the boy with the idea of enforcing a claim for mithan. A remarkable feature of the ensuing negotiations was Duli Pilia's violent objection to being brought back to the Apa Tani country; he protested that he had become a 'son' of Mai Höli and wanted to live as a Dafla.

Whereas theft committed by a member of the Apa Tani tribe or a person of other extraction living permanently among the Apa Tanis is definitely considered an offence against the community and is often dealt with by public action, a different view is taken of thefts by visitors to the Apa Tani country. Such thefts are treated more or less as civil disputes, and the owner of the stolen property is out for compensation, usually greatly exceeding its value, rather than for punishing the offender.

A few days after the execution of Chigi Duyu for theft, an Apa Tani surprised a Dafla woman removing rice from a granary of Mudang Tage village. Finding herself observed she fled, dropping her basket, but various circumstances pointed to the probability that she was from Talo village and the owner of the granary, Tage Takr, took the basket to Talo and asked everybody whether it belonged to him. Toko Höli, one of the richest and most influential men, recognized the basket as belonging to one of his wives, and when he heard how Tage Takr had come by it, he offered to pay compensation. But on his way back to Mudang Tage, Takr and his companions met Toko Höli's wife and captured her.

Negotiations for her release were initiated almost at once. Toko Höli offered one mithan, but Tage Takr demanded a ransom of two mithan. Prominent men of Talo came to Mudang Tage, and some of the most respected *akha buliang* of Haja and Duta went as mediators to Talo. All these negotiations took place in a most amicable atmosphere and no one had the slightest doubt that the incident would soon be settled. After a few days an agreement was reached and Tage Takr released Toko Höli's wife on receiving a ransom of a Tibetan bell worth about one mithan. We heard subsequently that Toko Höli's wife had been caught stealing on previous occasions, and that her husband was so annoyed by this habit, that he refused to accord her any longer the status of a wife, but kept her in his house like a concubine of slave origin. Her own brothers, who lived in Talo, had repudiated her, and had even suggested that it would be better if Toko Höli killed his wife rather than allowed her to bring disgrace upon his house.

But the Apa Tanis were indifferent to this aspect of the case. It was not their business to reform or punish a criminal Dafla woman but her attempt to rob them of their rice entitled them to compensation, and so they seized her to make sure that her husband would pay up.

It may be argued that the Apa Tanis' conception of tribal

justice is strictly utilitarian. Preservation of social harmony and equilibrium is the supreme aim. The man or woman of low social status or little wealth who through the habit of petty theft becomes a nuisance and a source of irritation and disunity is eliminated by public action, whereas the rich man who picks a quarrel with an equal and in its course captures perhaps men and mithan, is allowed to carry such a dispute as far as the squandering of wealth during a *lisudu* competition. There is obviously a subtle difference between common crime and certain acts of violence which are not altogether disreputable and do not necessarily discredit the perpetrator in the eyes of his co-villagers.

Our knowledge of customary Apa Tani law is yet too scanty to allow of enumeration and classification of offences, but the examples given in these notes leave little doubt that the Apa Tanis have evolved an effective system of preserving tribal harmony and dealing with social elements in a way which not only eliminates the source of disturbance but acts as a deterrent to other potential law-breakers.

The very fact that in the face of habitual crime the leaders of the tribe, fully backed by public opinion, take action against the offender, distinguishes Apa Tani justice from the attitude *vis-a-vis* crime prevailing among their Dafla and Miri neighbours. There every family feuds for itself and retaliation is practically the only answer to any trespass on property or attack on persons. Raids on houses and the slaughter of whole families feature there in the recent history of most larger settlements, and the Daflas lack an independent authority comparable to the Apa Tanis' *buliang* which can check such feuds as have led to a series of raids and counter-raids. Such unbridled violence is unthinkable among Apa Tanis, and while we have heard of a good many instances of *lisudu* competitions and of a smaller number of pre-arranged *gambu*-fights, there has within human memory been no raid of Apa Tanis on the house of a fellow-tribesman. Individuals may be seized and held to ransom, but the wholesale burning of houses and massacre of families, which is so common an occurrence in Dafla feuds, is foreign to the Apa Tanis as a means of settling endo-tribal disputes, although they resort to it in wars with neighbouring tribes. Public opinion and the social sense of the vast majority of Apa Tanis is too strong to permit such drastic and unilateral action. The *buliang* as the leaders of the tribe allow individual citizens ample scope to fight out private disputes without outside interference, but once the public peace is endangered they come down heavily on an offender guilty of criminal acts or they end by negotiation a quarrel which has assumed threatening aspects. And in this work as guardians of the peace they are supported by the other tribesmen who realize only too well that in an area as congested as the Apa Tani valley prosperity as well as security of life and property are dependent on the maintenance of law and order.

THREE AHOM FOLK-TALES

BY E. T. D. LAMBERT

THE following tales have been translated from the Assamese of Sjt Dharameswar Phukan by Sjt Mahikanta Saikia and myself. Sjt Dharameswar Phukan is one of the few people left in Assam who can still read Ahom. Ahom is the language of a tribe of Thai people who entered Assam from the N.E. over the Pangsau Pass early in the 13th Century A.D. and who ruled Assam for nearly 600 years thereafter until the British took over in 1838. The Ahoms have not forgotten their Thai connection and the Ahom Sabha are making every effort to maintain the link. It is generally thought the disintegration of Ahom rule was due to Hinduism and in these stories will be found traces of effort to link Ahom deities with Hindu gods. Sir Edward Gait wrote much about the Ahoms in his *History of Assam* and there is a small book by U. N. Gohain, *Assam under Ahom Rule*; otherwise references to the Ahoms are very scattered. At present the Ahoms are found mostly in the Upper Assam Valley, though their kingdom at one time extended as far as Goalpara and even included parts of Bhutan.

I

NANG KHAI

In olden times a certain sea-shore was the abode of Khaokham, the God of Water. On that sea-shore the fish-eater 'Bank' was fishing with a net. Whilst he was fishing, his net caught Khaokham, the God of the Water, accidentally. The net-rope broke away from Kundeo's hand and despite strenuous efforts, he could not find it again. Khaokham, the Water God began to get stricken by famine as he was confined in the net. He failed entirely to recover from his disease even after consulting the various doctors and *kabirajas* and gave up all hope of his life. He began to bellow like a buffalo. At that time, Darikhana (a small fish) and the crocodiles were his ambassadors. The ambassadors went to an Ahom Pandit named Mohung. They got the Pandit to tell the omens with regard to the King. Pandit Mohung told the omens according to the Ahom rites by means of a hen's legs. He discovered that the King's trouble was due to Kundeo alone. He said that it was only Kundeo who could cure him. This being reported to Khaokham, he sent for Kundeo. Kundeo was given full details of the illness of Khaokham. Kundeo then said that he could cure him and asked Khaokham what he would give him if he did so. 'My Lord! What reward will you give me if I cure you?' asked Kundeo. 'Whatever you ask for, dear Kundeo,' said Khaokham, 'The only thing is that I wish to recover.' Kundeo then began to strike Khaokham with ferns reciting *mantras* as he did so. He set his body free up to the waist and said to him, 'How do you feel now, my Lord?' 'I feel relieved from head to waist,' answered the King. Then the net was pulled down to the thigh and Kundeo asked the King, 'How do you feel now?' 'I feel relieved from

head to thigh this time, but I feel the lower part as heavy as a stone, my boy,' replied the King. Kundeo then finally removed the net from the whole of the King's body and asked again, 'How do you feel now?' 'This time I am restored to my former state,' answered Khaokham, 'and I feel in duty bound to give you what you ask for giving me this useful service.' 'Now tell me what you want,' said the Lord of the Water. 'My Lord! you have a she-buffalo having flat horns, named Cheng-muhini. I shall be satisfied if you will give her to me,' replied Kundeo. Kundeo duly received the she-buffalo. That she-buffalo was such that by virtue of her quality her droppings turned to silver and her urine to gold and the place where she lived literally dazzled. One day when Kundeo was grazing her, a ray of light from her caught the heaven. Indra, Lord of Heaven, seeing the light coming from the buffalo spreading up to Heaven, asked Kundeo for her. Kundeo agreed to give her but asked Indra to give him his daughter, Kafainga, in marriage in return. Indra agreed. Then Indra cleverly kept all the dancing girls of his Court nicely dressed in his outside sitting room. Indra said to Kundeo, 'Dear Kundeo, tell me which of these girls you want. All these girls are my daughters, take the one you prefer.' Kundeo seeing that all the girls were similarly dressed and all equally beautiful, found it difficult to make up his mind. Just at this time he met the Goddess of Learning by chance and she explained to Kundeo about the beauty and other qualities of the girls. 'Dear Kundeo,' she said, 'Has Indra agreed to give you his daughter in marriage? But these are all dancing girls of his Court. Let me tell you how to recognize Indra's daughter. Her name is Kafainga, her left eye has a squint and she is at the moment engaged in cleaning the cowshed, as you have arrived here. That is the daughter of Indra.' Having learned all this from the Goddess, Kundeo went to Indra and said, 'My Lord, I am only a poor buffalo-grazier, I am not fit to marry any of these beautiful daughters of yours. If my Lord favours me at all, I shall be quite happy if he will give me the maid-servant who is at present cleaning the cowshed.' Indra could not do otherwise and he gave his daughter, Kafainga, to Kundeo in marriage, and Kundeo took her off to Patalpur (the lower regions). Since then Kundeo has been known to the people as the fish-devourer. It is said that he fishes in abandoned *bhils*, filled-in ponds, sometimes in the form of a buffalo and sometimes in the form of a man or woman. It is a common saying that many have met him accidentally.

II

LAI TO BA LAOAF LA

Long, long ago, the Earth was divided into millions of parts and *Mungkhang*, the Earth, had no kind. Just as trees are grown in the forest, so people sprang from the ground to populate the coun-

tries ; they were born just like bamboo-shoots and they were very unrighteous.

At this time two demons, Kunkfi and Pukfi came up from the lower regions and appeared in Mungkan and said to the people 'Oh, people, barring ourselves, there are no kings or gods upon this earth. We are the kings of the whole earth, and you will prosper well if you worship us.' On this being said, the people began to worship the two demons. The demons were very bold and spared no one; aunts, sisters were all the same if they wanted wives. Indra, the Lord of Heaven, seeing these vicious activities, grew very angry. He created the Garun Pakhi (a mythical beast, half bird, half man) and sent it along to eat up all the sinners. Finding that the Garun Pakhi could not manage to kill and eat the whole population, he created nine very fierce tigers and sent them along too. Seeing that they also failed to finish off the job, he created a flood and caused death by starvation. Even then he failed to destroy everyone and the Lord of Heaven summoned a big conference. All the important *Devatas*, including Laokhiu Jasingfa, the old God of the Deodhai family, and the mother goddess of learning attended the conference. A decision at last was made to destroy all human beings by pouring boiling water on them. After a long time finally, on *Falgun* 24th (8 March), all human beings were destroyed by pouring boiling water on them. In this destruction, stones floated and bamboos and wood sank in water.

Thaulipling, an elderly and important Devata of that time, had come to learn about the proposed destruction and had prepared a huge stone boat (*Bhoor*) beforehand. At the time when the boiling water was being poured, he took a black cow with him and got into the boat and was saved. The spray of the boiling water was like flame. Elephants screamed in their stables and cattle in the cowsheds groaned, and all human beings died and floated on the surface of the water. Kunkfi and Pukfi were also burned to ashes. Old Thaulipling had a very dear son. Seeing that he too would die, he began to cry. He beat his head and his breast and burst into tears. Souls flew like flies into the sky.

After a time, the smell of the dead bodies began to spread and it even got as far as heaven. Indra, the Lord of Heaven, being unable any longer to stand the smell of the dead bodies, ordered Agni Devata (the God of Fire) to eat up the dead bodies. Agni Devata accordingly burnt up the whole Munkang country.

Thaulipling being unable to bear the heat of the fire, killed the black cow he had taken with him and took shelter in her belly. Agni Devata passed over the dead cow, half-burnt, and went on towards the last. Thaulipling found a thing like a yeast cake in the belly of the cow and planted it on a burnt hill. After some days, a seedling came up and covered as many as three hills, and the creeper finally produced a gourd as big as a mountain. The

fruit contained all living things from insects to human beings, even including large elephants.

The cries of the beings in the fruit reached heaven, and Indra ordered his eldest son, Aifalan, to kill all these beings with his thunderbolt. As ordered, Aifalan appeared suddenly near the fruit holding a thunderbolt in his hand. As Aifalan was on the point of striking the fruit with his thunderbolt, all the beings began to entreat him not to destroy them. He was moved by their entreaties and did not strike the thunderbolt.

Thaulipling thinking that the order of Indra would become nullified if the fruit was not pierced, called out and said to the beings, 'Hallo there, beings! I planted this gourd. You all took shelter in the fruit and, therefore, I am your father. Let me sacrifice my life on your behalf. But, just for a moment listen to me. In future, whenever you perform any festival, don't take anything before making an offering in my name. Whatever you take, take after dropping a little of it in my name. If you don't do that, I shall become an evil spirit in heaven and will cause great trouble to your bowels.'

In this way, after explaining various customs, he changed himself into a fork-tailed shrike and sitting on top of the fruit said to Aifalan, 'Holder of the thunderbolt, pray, do not destroy the fruit; kill me instead, as I wish to sacrifice my life on behalf of the fruit.' No sooner had he said this than the bird was burnt to ashes by the thunderbolt. The thundering sound caused the fruit to break in half, and all the beings came out and spread all over the world. Ducks, hens, goats, pigs, birds, etc., came under the charge of men, and as they prayed to God in fear of the thunderbolt, they became objects of sacrifice to all gods, including Indra.

The souls of birds, beasts, fish and men took their respective places before God. So, according to the Ahom scripture, it is no offence to sacrifice animals before the gods.

III

THE STORY OF LENGCHENG AND KEOMEN

In ancient times, there was a huge tall tree on a mountain. The tree had been planted by a *Devata*.

One day Lengcheng went on a deer-hunting expedition on that mountain and whilst in search of deer, found the tree. He wished to have *tuluthas* and *durpatis* (weaving looms) made from the tree for his wife. But the tree belonged to Keomen, the Naga King and he was unable to cut down the tree. Lengcheng, however, disobeying the orders of the Naga King, cut down the tree. When the tree fell, there was a dreadful noise and the whole mountain began to quiver as if in an earthquake. On one branch of the tree were the nests of many birds, such as the eagle and the kite and so forth. The nests were completely destroyed when the tree fell. One branch of the tree killed a number of animals in its fall, in-

cluding several deer; another branch fell in a big river and killed nine snake-gods; yet another branch damaged the loom of the Naga Prince as it fell. He, however, was not angry about this. One branch killed his father and mother. At this also the Naga Prince did not grow angry. One branch killed his grandmother. On this happening he lost his temper and, jumping up, took his sword in his hand and prepared to fight Lengcheng, taking also his expert fighters with him.

On his way to the plains from the hills, he killed countless wild animals. Such was the stream of arrows that as many as seven of them pierced the head of one cat. The subjects of the Ahom King, Lengcheng, seeing innumerable soldiers belonging to the Naga King Keomen, did not fight, but a furious encounter took place between the two kings. At last Keomen killed Lengcheng by piercing him with gold and silver spears. Lengcheng fall to the ground was heavy as an elephant and, on falling, he died. Lengcheng's consort began to weep and went into passions of grief. She besmeared herself with mud like an eel. The Queen had a brother-in-law, Chaochainoi by name. After a quarrel with his brother in his youth, he had left home and become king of a distant country. The Queen had two ambassadors named Chong and Poh and she sent them to the King's brother with the news of the death of her husband. After travelling a great distance, the two ambassadors came across some cowherds and they enquired of them the whereabouts of Chaochainoi. 'Boys do you know Chaochainoi's house? Where is his residence? How far is it?' they asked. The cowherds pointed to the house and said 'That is the one with the pigeons flying round it.' The two ambassadors accordingly went to Chaochainoi's house and, kneeling before him, told him the whole story of the death of his brother. Having listened to the account of his brother's death at the hands of a Naga, Chaochainoi became grief-stricken and very angry and he got ready his soldiers to fight a battle. Chaochainoi's grandmother, however, warned him not to go to the battle and she tried to calm him down. 'My boy,' she said. 'You should not go to fight the Nagas.' 'Your brother Lengcheng was very unpleasant to me. He took away forcibly all your paternal property; everything we had he misappropriated, elephants, horses, buffaloes, cows and all our land. He left only a few useless buffaloes and cows as your share and went off. I brought you up by begging and by feeding on roots from the jungle. He was not kind to you. Why should you now feel for him? In fact, I hate what you say; just as the rotten flesh of cows and buffaloes smells so does your talk to me. He is not your brother. He was born your enemy, and it is all the better that he is now dead. You may now live happily in ruling the country. I, your grand mother, say all his.' But her words were of no avail; nothing could change his mind; he was very unhappy at the death of his brother.

Chaochainoi took all his fighting men with him and went to meet Keomen, the Naga King. Keomen got ready for the fray when Chaochainoi appeared before him in battle array. The soldiers of both sides refused to fight and left it to the two kings to fight it out themselves. Eventually Chaochainoi killed Keomen and chopped off the head, which he took back to his own country where he purified himself in medicine-mixed water and saying mantras, trampled on the head. He then went on ruling his country in peace.

BRATAS IN BENGAL

BY CHARULAL MUKHERJEA

I

AMONGST the plethora of customs observed by the Hindus of Bengal, *Bratas* engage our attention as the most peculiar feature of the religious practices (using it in the widest sense) of women-folk. Although the ill-starred widows are not debarred from the observance of a few of them, most of the observers of these folk-rituals are either maidens or married women.

The dictionary meaning of a *Brata* is 'an act of religious devotion voluntarily undertaken.' *Brati* is one 'engaged in observing vows' and we are reminded how Tagore named his boy-scouts of Santiniketan *Brati-Balak*. To be more precise according to Sanskrit root meanings, *Brata* is an action that leads to merit and on practising it, one's sin wanes on purgation. The *Prakritibad Dictionary* in Bengali cites the example of *Chandrayana Brata* under this category, but we should remember here that it is a religious ritual of penance done with the help of priests.

In undertaking these *Bratas*, it is however essential that the vow of observing them should be taken, but whether or not all of them can be considered as strictly religious practices, if by 'religion' we mean 'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life,'¹ presents a fascinating problem to the ethnologist called upon to disentangle skeins of magic, whether considered as *magia* or *magica maleficia* (good or bad), the double expression often applied by Apuleius² and religion, the higher rung of the magic-ladder.

II

At this stage I shall give an account of two such *Bratas*, specifically aiming at the attainment of physical beauty before I analyse their constituent elements in the light of science. These are termed *Nakhchuter Brata* and *Ruphaluder Brata* and may be translated as the vow of nail-paring and the vow of turmeric charm.

Let us now examine the first, the vow of nail-paring, in some detail. This vow, according to custom, is taken on the fourth day of the full-moon of Chaitra. In some localities, the completion of the vow requires four years, while in others, the entire ritual is finished in one year. To my knowledge, this *Brata* is now prevalent in Krishnagar, Nabadwip and Hughly and enquiries revealed that some steps are skipped over here and there to suit peculiar conditions, but the general features all agree.

The most essential requisite of the *Brata* is a female barber. The *Brati* woman must observe the taboo of not paring her nails from the last day of Magh to Falgun. And as Chaitra is ushered

¹ Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Abridged edition), p. 50.

² L. Thorndyke, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1929), Vol. I, p. 234.

in, she is customarily prohibited from massaging her body with oil till the ceremonials are concluded. When the day arrives, she keeps in readiness a piece of napkin (*gamcha*) five pieces of turmeric, five *cowrie*-shells, five betel-leaves, five betel-nuts, five *batashas* (a fried cake of treacle), some honey, the vegetable *parawal*, locks of jute-fibres dyed in black.

Next she invites a married woman on the fourth day of the full-moon of Chaitra, gets her nails pared by the barber woman and the edges of her feet painted by means of the red pigment, *alta*, after rubbing them well with a piece of porous brick. The *Brati* herself combs the hair of the invited female guest and daubs her forehead with vermilion. Then she puts the five pieces of turmeric, *cowrie*-shell, betel-leaf, betel-nut and *batasha* of the same number in the new napkin. It is now customary for the *Brati* to rub the back of her guest till such time as she gathers dirt sufficient to make a doll-like puppet with the greasy material. Next she paves the nails of the woman under the vow, a few ends of her hair are cut and kept tied in the napkin. When this process is gone through, the woman-guest is made to wear a sari with a red-border and seated on wooden seat on the floor. A puppet is now sketched on her back with honey and touching the *parawal* onto the eyes of the pictorial representation, the *Brati* chants :

'Let my eyes look like *parawal* cut in halves.'

Next the feet of the guest are dipped in milk mixed with *alta* (red pigment) while she prays :

'Let my complexion be like *alta* mixed in milk.'

A well-shaped banana is now taken out and the fingers of the invited lady are measured with it, while the *Brati* utters the wish:

'Let my fingers be shapely like bananas.'

Then the locks of jute dyed in black are placed over the hair of the guest as the wish is recited :

'Let my hair be long like these jute-fibres and thick and dark and curly like black glossy silk.'

The chantings and prayers over, all these articles are tied in a corner of the napkin.

Now it is time for the woman-guest to be ceremonially treated to a meal. The rites are observed for four years consecutively and custom requires that on the first year she should be fed with fried grams and sweetened fried-paddy. On the second, she is given curd and fried-paddy, flattened rice and sweetened fried-paddy on the third, while the last term entertains her to a feast of *loochi* (fried wafers in clarified butter), fish and vegetable curry together with a sumptuous dish of sweets and fruit. As she dines, a lamp of *ghee* or oil is lit and after dinner she is presented with iron-bangles,¹ lac-bracelets, *alta*, a casket of vermilion, a napkin, hair-oil recipes, a mirror, a comb, a fan and a rupee. Now it is

¹ Undoubtedly worn to chase away evil-spirits that may do harm to married women. Iron is widely used in Bengal to exorcise ghosts.

time for the *Brati* to carry the lamp lighted on her head to a tank where it is ceremonially immersed along with the nail-parings.

The fourth year brings the folk-ritual to the climax of completion. Four married women are invited and seated face to face. Their nails are pared by a barber woman and their bodies rubbed with oil and bathed. Next their feet are painted with *alta*, they are made to wear red-bordered saris and seated on wooden seats facing the south, north, east and west. Then as on previous years, the dirt on their backs are again shaped like dolls and the wishes are chanted as already recorded and the guests are entertained. The same presents follow and the burning lamp is dipped in water by the *Brati* as she plunges in a tank or river along with the nail-parings.

The object of the Ruphaluder Brata is to gain beauty. Like the previous rite, it is also observed by maidens and married women for four years. It starts on the last day of the Bengali year with the ceremonial anointing of a married woman with pasted turmeric and other ceremonies and continues for the whole of Baisakh. On the last day of Baisakh of the fourth year, four married women are dressed in appropriate robes, given toilette and presents as in the Nakhchuter Brata but the first guest so treated gets better things as a red-bordered cloth dyed yellow in turmeric, a silver vermilion casket, a mirror, a comb, a fan and a rupee.

III

Now a few notes on the magical significance of the requisites of the *Brata* and the attending ceremonials may not be out of place. The observance of the taboo of not paring the nails and abstinence from the use of oil possibly serves the purpose of conservation. In the analogous practices referred to in anthropological literature, we read how while the Sea Dayaks of Banting in Sarawak were out fighting, the women might not oil their hair lest misfortune might befall them. The Kai of Northern New Guinea carefully secrete nail-parings, hair and teeth in the belief that should these fall into the hands of enemies, they might be used to harm the owners by a process of contagious magic. Similarly the Tumbuka of Nyasaland lay them in ant-hills just as these nail-parings were immersed in water by the *Brati*, beyond the reach of possible harm. As regards the puppet representation practised in the ritual it is indeed a specimen of white magic. But it would not be at all irrelevant to refer to a parallel, although in the realm of black magic. Thus we see how a Malay charm requires the nails, hair, eye-brows, spittle and so forth of your intended victim enough to represent every part of his person, and then make them into his likeness with wax from a deserted bees' comb. Scorch the figure by holding it over a lamp every night for seven nights and say;

It is not wax that I am scorching

It is the liver, heart and spleen of

So-and-so that I scorch.¹

The Indian custom of burning the effigy of an enemy called Kushaputtal may also be cited here.

The point that almost all the ceremonial requisites number *five* can be studied in the context that *five* in Hindu ritual is a mystic number with an auspicious significance. Gods are offered 'Pancha Naibedya' (five offerings), the feeding of five Brahmins in a feast is at least second best. The five deities are offered food before the Brahmin takes his meal and five we hear is extolled in the essay on 'The Ei at Delphi.'² The other requisites—vermilion, *alta*, a red-bordered sari—have occult virtues associated with their colour. Further, the use of honey in drawing the puppet on the guest's back can only aim at producing a sweet result. Honey or sugar-candy, we remember, is put into the mouth of new-born babies so that they may have sweet speech and a new bride in Bengal has honey applied to her ear and given a *sandesh* in her mouth with the expressed wish that whatever she may hear may sound honeyed and anything she may speak may be sweet. And last but not least, the burning lamp on the head of the Brati reminds one forcibly of the perpetually burning lamp in the little shrine at Nemi for the safety of the Emperor Claudius and his family and the worship of a perpetual fire, cared for by the holy maidens at Latium and the Catholic practice of dedicating holy candles in their churches³.

IV

An analysis of the rituals described leads to the conclusion that their object is the attainment of physical beauty. This cult of beauty derives from the instinctive biological urge of women to look beautiful in the appropriate season of life in tune with the plant and animal kingdom. To fulfil this aim, the ceremonials that are gone through are really magical processes intended to compel the unseen powers to grant to the *Brati* her wish. On the principle of *similia similibus* (like producing like), which goes by Frazer's term of Homoeopathic magic, the various aspects of female beauty in the eye, face, fingers, and hair are conjured by the Law of Similarity into the beauty of the half-cut *parawal*, face like a betel-leaf, fingers shaped like bananas and hair like dark jute-fibres. And by puppet representations, they are actually made to touch in the physical contact of married women, thought to be repositories of good-luck in coverture, so prized by women in general. The feeding of married women-guests and presenting them with customary articles of toilet are only intended to be charms to conjure unseen forces to transmit their luck to the devotee by the Law of Association and silent sympathy that moulds Lucy's form to beauty in Wordsworth's poem.

¹ pp. 8-9.

² Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³ Thorndyke, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

Religion presupposes pleasing superhuman deities by prayer, and sacrifice and implies a pliable natural law, and magic, the lower step, implies coercion of unseen spirits in an inflexible order of the universe. Not that in the wishes chanted, there are not elements of prayer. But it is certain that it does not spring from a cult of fear of an inexorable universal law and has thus an element of religion. The fact that no priest is required need not be underlined, although there are many Bratas attended by them. All that we can understand from them is that they may be the relic of a state of society when the function of the priest and the sorcerer whether individual or public, was not clearly differentiated. 'To serve his purpose man wooed the will of gods or spirits by prayer and sacrifice, while at the same time he had recourse to ceremonies and forms of words which he hoped would of themselves bring about the desired result without the help of God or Devil. In short he practised religious and magical rites simultaneously.'¹

That the *Bratas* as described show a non-Aryan origin is perhaps undisputed. They reveal a fusion of culture between Aryan and the practices of the Anyabratas, as the pre-Aryans were called. But the thesis calls for voluminous evidence. What we are concerned with here is centred round only two aspects of this evidence. And all that we find in the materials goes to show that in the state of human mind and thought represented in the Bratas, the women simply desire to arrest the superhuman deity by rites and chants on the unconscious logic of magic which is however diluted with and reinforced by faint elements of religion.

¹ Frazer, op. cit., p. 3.

THE KUMARBHAG PAHARIAS

BY A. R. ADAIR

THE Kumarbhag Paharias are a small tribe of Bihar about whom very little has so far been written. The fullest existing account is by Risley in *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* and there is a further account by L. S. S. O'Malley in the *Santal Parganas District Gazetteer*.

At the 1941 census when they were recorded separately from Mal Paharias they totalled 9,572 in the province and 9,301 in the Santal Parganas. 6,431 were in the Pakaur Damin, 2,041 in the Chandna and Bokrabandh bungalows of Godda and 729 in the Dumka subdivision.

During February 1946 I made a short tour of the Kumarbhag Hills and as nothing further has been written since O'Malley's account, I have recorded my impressions in the form of a diary.

16 February 1946. I left Dumka by car in the afternoon and reached Dumarchir that evening.

Dumarchir is on the edge of the Kumarbhag country and 38 miles from Dumka, but the road is very bad, the last six miles after branching off the Pakaur road beyond Amrapara being a little used cart track, very difficult to negotiate at night.

During the evening I met the Inspector, Parganait and Sub-Inspector of Santal Schools and talked to them about local affairs. It seems there is no school of any description in the elaka of Dumarchir bungalow, the nearest being at Panchwara, Kuskira, and Parerkola, each about five or six miles from Dumarchir and correspondingly more from the interior parts of the jurisdiction. A residential U. P. School would be useful to all the Paharias on the eastern slopes of the hill range as well as to Santals of Dumarchir and surrounding villages.

17 February 1946. This morning I distributed some seized cloth among villagers of the locality and eventually got away at about 10 A.M. in the wake of a long string of Santals and Paharias carrying my camp equipment slung on bamboo poles. This is the method of carrying adopted in these parts. Only the women carry things on their heads to any extent.

After two miles walk through rough undulating country, scrubby jungle alternating with coarse grass and occasional patches of cultivation, we reached Tilepara, a scattered Santal community living in small tolas spread over a wide area. From there the path rose steeply and as we climbed, the foot hills with their scattered thatch-roofed Santal villages half hidden by mango trees and toddy palms came increasingly into view.

At noon we reached Sajanipara, our first contact with the Kumarbhag Paharias, where we saw something of their way of life and methods of cultivation.

This village has taken advantage of a fairly level terrace in the hillside and a natural spring with a good flow of water, to cultivate a certain amount of paddy, though here, as in most Paharia villages, the main cultivation is by *Kurao*, a system by which the hillside

jungle is cut away every few years, and a crop of maize, *ghangra* or millet grown for several seasons. There is no attempt at ploughing or manuring, the seed being sown in a hole made with a digging-stick, and after two or three years of cropping the jungle is again allowed to grow so that humus can form from the dead leaves. The yield is naturally poor and the scattered population of Paharias relies on extensive rather than intensive cultivation. As this *Kurao* system is very prejudicial to the forests it is a constant source of friction with the Forest Department, and the Manjhi, Kamla Paharia, with whom we talked in a mixture of Hindi, Santali and Bengali, told us that the villagers are regularly fined Rs. 25 or Rs. 30 and have all the harassment of attending court every year to pay the fines for the same forest land on which they have encroached. 'Why cannot we be allowed to pay rent rather than a fine?' he told me. 'It is the same thing in the end. We pay the fines and continue to do *Kurao* because we have no other means of livelihood, but we would prefer to pay it as rent.'

After lunch we started an ever steeper climb to Jamri, and from there we continued up a winding path through breast-high scrub. Being beyond the sal forest we had an unimpeded view over the foot hills and far across the country below. The view was magnificent and comparable with the map-like panorama one sees of the plains from the road up to Kurseong.

While negotiating a particularly steep and rugged defile through outcropping black rocks I noticed that the coolies seemed rather excited, and on enquiring the reason was told that two leopards had been seen here the previous day, and a chaukidar had been mauled by one of them. This spot was quite near to Durio which is situated in a most picturesque setting on a sort of terrace or ledge of the plateau, about 100 ft. below the top. The formation is rather like Rohtas, the top, where we decided to camp being dead flat, and the sides falling away in almost sheer rock to the ledge where Durio lies among its mango trees and palms. This flat top is approached by a zig-zag path up the cliff and is so smooth and devoid of vegetation that with very little dressing it could be used as a landing ground. The lack of vegetation is because the rock comes to within a few inches of the surface.

The villagers had made quite elaborate arrangements for us, and built large bashas for all the 'camp followers' to shelter in. Bashas in these hill tracts are easily put up and cost nothing, for the timber, branches and thatching grass are all indigenous, and the Paharias are so adept with their axes that a useful shelter materializes in a very short time.

The Parganait of Bokrabandh, and the Paharia Sardar of Dumarchir, who lives at Tilepara, were in attendance, but not many of the villagers were present, for these Kumarbagh Paharias are very shy and as no officer had ever been to this area before they needed a good deal of persuasion before they would come to our

camp. However there was one old Manjhi, Mangla Paharia, the stipendiary Manjhi of village Sindgarsa which we were to visit later who was quite forthcoming, and we asked him to collect a lot of the villagers at the camp the following morning. Mangla is a typical KumARBhag Paharia—a little over 5 feet tall but of good physique, very dark skinned and with long hair fastened in a sort of bun behind and kept in place by a bamboo peg. He had an imposing moustache, trained down at the ends, and wore silver earrings and silver armlets. He was altogether rather reminiscent of the conventional idea of a pirate. In addition to these ornaments many of the men wear long silver chains round their necks. The women, also of good physique and graceful bearing, dress their hair in an elaborate spiral coil at the back of the head and pin it in place with a carved silver ornament. They have silver anklets as well as the ornaments worn by the men, and all seem to take a pride in their appearance. They are remarkably clean; in fact quite fastidiously so, and differ markedly in this respect from the Sauria Paharias whom we came across later in our tour.

18 February 1946. This morning a number of KumARBhag Paharias collected and gave me some facts about their tribal life.

They have only three village officials as compared with seven in the Santal community. The first is the *Majye* (cf. *manjhi*) who settles village disputes, can impose fines, and generally assists in all village social matters—marriage, birth ceremony, funeral procession and so on.

The next is the *Dehri* (cf. Santal *naeke*) a kind of hereditary village priest who offers worship at the time of the different festivals, of which there are four—*Puntadih* in *Magh* (cf. *Sohrae*) *Tatherye* in *Baisakh*, *Gangierye* in *Bhado*, and *Osurerye* in *Aghan*. These are really cultivation festivals, the last three being concerned with the mango, maize and millet crops respectively.

For these functions the *Dehri* does not receive any remuneration in cash, but gets rice beer from every household and this he shares with the *Majye* and the third village official the *Godet*. This latter is a sort of 'call boy' who receives one rupee a year from the whole village, and about 2 seers of maize from each house. There are no other officials except the *Sardar* who is in charge of a fairly large area and corresponds roughly to the Santal *Parganait* though with less powers. In village tribal law an appeal from a decision of the *Majye* lies to the *Sardar* who in such matters is assisted by other *majhies* and villagers of the surrounding area in conference, but without any formal tribunal being set up. Enforcement of tribal law seems much more vague and less cut and dried than is the case with Santals.

The Paharias have no sept names like the Santals, and there is therefore no bar to intermarriage in the same village so long as no blood relationship is involved. Marriage between cousins is forbidden. KumARBhag Paharias will intermarry with Mal

Paharias, but will not have any social intercourse with Sauria Paharias whom they look down on as unclean and unworthy to mix with their tribe in any way, though all speak the same language, Malto. From what I saw of the Saurias later I am inclined to agree on the point of their uncleanness. The Saurias eat beef but not the Kumarbhag or Mal Paharias. Their marriage procedure is that a *situ* or match maker is selected (cf. *raebaric* among the Santals) who is sent out by the prospective bridegroom to look for a bride, and not *vice versa*. Rs. 14 is about the average bride price, of which the mother gets Re. 1, the father Re. 1, all the agnates Re. 1 each and Re. 1 goes to the village community. The balance, if any, is used for feasting. The normal approved type of marriage is called *benje*, but *ghar jawae* is also quite common, and in this case the bride pays Rs. 7 to the groom's father, and the daughter and her issue inherit the father's property. Both widow marriage and divorce are allowed, but do not seem to be very usual.

There is nothing corresponding to the Santal *ghardijawae*.

An interesting side light transpired in the course of discussion on social ceremonies. Apparently at the *ramdah* or birth ceremony which takes place about 3 months after any child is born, the father, whatever his status, has to feed the entire village—men, women and children—and this is a serious cause of indebtedness among the tribe. On this account as well as for lack of food at the lean time of the year, they have to resort freely to the mahajans at Dumarchir and Amrapara. The rates of interest charged are 50% in cash transactions and 25% in kind.

The Kumarbhag Paharias have no *bitlaha*, though of course there is excommunication or outcasting from the tribe. This is on a decision of the tribal officials, and generally for cases of illicit sexual relationship with a member of another tribe—e.g., a Santal or Diku. After such excommunication the accused can be taken back on *jati kamat rae* (cf. *jomjati*) which entails feasting all the surrounding villages at the accused's expense and may cost anything from Rs. 20 to Rs. 60. Christians would be automatically outcast, and in their case there can be no question of *jati kamat rae*. There is however no Christianity in this area, as missionary activity has not spread to these hill tops.

In the case of illicit sexual relationship among the tribe the punishment is a fine of Rs. 5 or a goat.

We finished this 'darbar' at about 10-30 a.m., and then started out to visit surrounding villages.

The first was Durio itself nestling on its sheltered edge, which we reached after a scramble down the cliff. The houses were neat and clean, but much less substantial than Santal dwellings. Paharia houses are usually built of bamboo lattice, thinly plastered with mud on the inside, and roofed with the inevitable *khar* thatching grass. A peculiarity as compared with the Santals is that the door is always at the end and not in the side wall.

On leaving Durio we went on to Golkunda, a mixed village consisting of a Santal and a Paharia tola separated by more than a mile of very fine new sal jungle. It is on the southern slopes of the plateau, towards Bokrabandh, and we had to climb down about 700 feet to the river valley to reach Golkunda.

In the Paharia tola I found that *kurao* had been allowed throughout the village at the last settlement, there being 24 houses of Paharias and 14 of Santals, with 97 bighas paddy land and 578 bighas bari—the latter nearly all *kurao* on the hill slopes. The distribution of land seems adequate for the population. In this area I was told that the rotation of *kurao* was 8 years, 3 years successive cropping and 5 years fallow to allow the jungle to grow again and form humus.

Our next halt was village Pakrikunda, consisting of a very small Santal tola of 3 houses only, and another tola of about 20 Paharia houses some distance further on. The local manjhi took us to his house where we talked with a number of villagers.

As with all the Paharia villages we came to, they proved very shy at first and all disappeared into their houses as soon as we arrived but gradually they plucked up courage and after 10 minutes or so we had a large circle of curious spectators. Many of them had never seen an Englishman before, and in all the villages we visited we were told that the only official who had come to these parts in living memory was an assistant Settlement Officer some 20 years ago. There is no paddy grown here, and the only cultivation is by *kurao*. The main crops are maize, millet, *ghangra* and a little *rahar*.

19 February 1946. This was our day for striking camp, and was as fine as the previous day had been stormy and dull.

Mangal Paharia was still with us—for he was determined we should visit his village, though it was not on our programme. However he said it was not much out of the way so we let him lead on, and after an hour's walk through rather sparse jungle and undulating country, we came to his village, Sindgarsai. It is a large Kumarbhadg Paharia village of some 48 houses scattered over the hill side amidst huge red boulders. We were proudly led to Mangal's house and seated on carefully dusted *katias*. A large crowd soon collected—and they seemed less shy than in the villages we had previously visited, probably because by now word had got round that we were 'harmless.' The people were quite well to do—as Paharias go—and said they had no special wants except for the usual complaint as to shortage of cloth. There is a good deal of bamboo cultivation in these parts which brings in a valuable additional income. On the whole the Kumarbhadg Paharias are a happy and contented lot with few wants and few outside interests. Public health is good and there is practically no crime.

Their religion consists of house worship of Gosani or household gods and village worship at the time of the major festivals at the Cutor Hodor (cf. Manjhithan) and Ailarie—corresponding to the

Santal jaherthan. Mangla showed us the village Cutor Hodor which was very dilapidated. Others that we saw were quite well preserved, and had the central post decorated with the tails of squirrels, hares and other small animals killed in the chase.

The next village we wanted to visit was Sidopara, and to get there we had to go back on our tracks nearly 2 miles. It was only then that I realised how in his enthusiasm Mangla had led us far off our route in order to show us his own village. We might really have saved ourselves the trouble of going back to Sidopara, which is a very scattered village in which we found few people to talk to. The manjhi was away and so apparently were most of the villagers.

Another hour's walk brought us to Dalkundi, a well-to-do mixed Santal and Kumarbhag Paharia village, situated on rather more level ground than is usually found in these hills, and with consequently better cultivation. There is even a certain amount of paddy land.

The Manjhi Ranjit Murmu told us there was great difficulty over drinking water as the only source was a small spring at a long distance from the village. They had a well which has collapsed as they had no bricks to line it with.

The next village Bara Palma was only about a mile further on, and in similar circumstances to Dalkundi. There is a mixed Santal and Paharia population, living as is usual in such cases, in separate tolas at some distance apart. The villagers are contented, cultivation is sufficient and here at least there is no difficulty over the water supply.

Bara Paktari was our next call, a mixed village very similar to the last, and from there we had a longish trek, the path winding up a steep mountain side, bright with orange flowering shrubs, till eventually we reached Nado Para. There was no suitable camping site here, the village being on a very steep slope, so we had to push on to Chamir, which is separated from Nado Para by a deep ravine.

There was still no sign of our camp, but after scrambling up the steep rocky slope at the other side of the ravine we came to an almost level terrace in the mountain, which was irrigated from a stream higher up and had been turned into quite extensive paddy land. There our coolies had arrived with all the camp equipment, and not even waiting for 'bakshish' had dumped everything in one of the now dry paddy fields and made off to return to their respective villages.

Chamer is a Sauria Paharia village—we had now left the Kumarbhag area,—and this was our first contact with the Saurias. The first impression was that they were much dirtier both in their persons and clothing than the Kumarbhag people, who definitely take a pride in their personal appearance and cleanliness.

Our camp was soon surrounded by a curious crowd—mostly composed of women and babies. The former in pictureque though dirty orange and red coarse hand woven saris, the latter

as usual naked. A point which soon became obvious in respect of the Saurias, and this is a natural corollary of their unhygienic way of life, was that their public health was greatly inferior to that of the KumARBhag Paharias. Skin diseases are very common, and smallpox as well as other complaints ravage the Sauria villages.

That day we covered about 11 miles in the course of our wanderings, and were quite ready for an early night.

20 February 1946. Today we struck camp and got away by 10 a.m.

Our first halt was village Chamer Bedo, from where smallpox had been reported. On investigation it transpired that so far only one man had been affected, but he was in the infectious stage wandering about the village, and early preventive measures were obviously called for. I sent a Chaukidar to Godda asking for a vaccinator to be sent out immediately, and also explained to the villagers and in particular to Dharma Paharia, who had been sarbadar of the manjhi during his minority, the importance of their all being vaccinated. The Manjhi was away at Chandna, it being hot day there, but Dharma undertook to get all the villagers to agree to vaccination. There is a good deal of superstitious opposition to it among these tribes

From Chamer Bedo, we had a long climb down to Manspara, which is in a river valley, far below our last camp, and the path at times very steep, traversed some fine sal forest through which we scrambled down to the stream. The village consisting of a Santal tola of about 17 houses on the floor of the valley and a Sauria Paharia tola of some 25 houses a mile beyond perched on a spur of plateau, is picturesquely situated amid hills and forest, and while the Santals have made the most use of the level valley for paddy cultivation, as usual the Paharias have fallen back almost entirely on *Kurao*, of which there is a good deal on the surrounding slopes. The general health of the Paharia tola seemed very poor; the Manjhi himself is a leper, and there is a lot of beri-beri as well as the usual Sauria quota of skin diseases. The Manjhi complained that the Forest Department is not allowing the villagers sufficient timber for building their houses, and the ever present question of *Kurao* was also brought up.

Another steep descent from this spur of hill, and after skirting a small tank fed by a spring in the hill-side, we began the long climb to the plateau again. It was a steep pull, the rocky path winding ever higher and higher through open scrubby jungle bright with flowering shrubs. After nearly an hour's climb the thatched roofs of Manspara far below us still looked but a stone's throw away, like a toy village which one could almost bend down and touch, so clear was the atmosphere.

After the strenuous climb to Bara Serma, which must be nearly 1000 ft. above Manspara,—and by now the mid-day sun was hot—we were glad to call a halt and sit under the welcome shade of a

mango tree, while we talked to the Manjhi, Jabara Paharia, a cripple with a withered foot, who was, however, very talkative and a good deal more nimble both of intellect and movement than most of the other Saurias we met. He hobbled along quite well, and insisted on coming to our camp at Madni, where he again turned up next morning. There did not seem to be any real difficulties in the village and they were fairly contented but Jabara like all of us, deplored the general high cost of living and in particular the shortage of cloth.

Dando, our next village, was at the other side of the plateau and we had to go about 2 miles back on our tracks in a general southerly direction to get there, while Madni our camp was roughly North. We got to Dando about 2 p.m., and found it one of the largest Sauria villages we had come across, there being 12 tolas of some 100 houses in all. There was smallpox in one of the tolas, four or five deaths having already taken place, and I made arrangements for a vaccinator to be sent here also.

We found our camp ready for us at Madni when we got there at about tea time, and already the villagers were busy with their axes putting up a *basha* for the chaukidars, manjhis and other 'hangers-on' to shelter for the night. We had walked about 9 miles that day, but a good deal of it fairly steep climbs.

21 February 1946. While striking camp in the morning a large crowd of villagers collected, mostly typical Saurias, with their rather fuzzy fringe in front and bun of long hair at the back, held in place by a wooden peg. They said there was great difficulty over water supply, as their kacha well (which I tested and found to contain about 4 ft. of water) dries up in the hot weather. It should be sunk deeper and made pucca.

We left Madni at about 10 a.m., and proceeded over undulating rather thinly wooded country to Sidler, a fairly large Sauria Paharia village on the very edge of the plateau. We did not delay here as the place was deserted except for women and pigs, almost the whole village having gone to the hatia at Chandna. The land falls away steeply from the edge of the village and the path zig-zags at first through thick jungle, then over rocky slopes and finally down to the plain far below where fertile fields of rabi crops extend up to the next village, Phulbaria.

The well which serves Sidler's needs is almost half way down the side of the plateau, and the women have to carry the water all this way up. A large number of them who were drawing water when we approached scattered like frightened animals into the jungle and peered curiously at us from behind the tree trunks as we passed. They were mostly dressed in the traditional orange and red saris of the Paharias.

This was the last of the Paharia country, for after stopping at Phulbaria, and then at Ladopathar—both Santal villages, we struck the main road to Simlong and left the hills behind.

TWO KHARIA WEDDINGS

BY W. G. ARCHER

I

THE Kharias are an important tribe of Chota Nagpur closely allied to the Mundas, Hos and Santals. Sarat Chandra Roy considered them a mean between the Mundas and Uraons while Dalton wrote that in the energy, vivacity and warmth of their dancing, they excelled all their brethren. In the following notes, I describe two weddings; the first, a Dudh Kharia wedding on strictly ancestral lines and the second, a reformist wedding of a type now current with a small minority.

The first wedding took place in the Kharia tola of Biru (p.s. Sindega, Ranchi District) on 19 April 1940. The girl was Chutri, daughter of Tuila Kharia and the boy was Sanichar son of Charka Kharia, of Kapurdega, p.s. Tetetanga, 12 miles away.

The marriage talks had started in February when Chutri had gone with her brother's wife on a visit to Kapurdega. During her stay, she had caught the eye of Charka who thought she would be a good match for his son and a little later he had had gone over to Biru and fixed it up. The formal betrothal dialogues ended in March and on their way, Charka's party saw a man ploughing and a bullock being led. Both of these were good omens, and since nothing else was noticed, the wedding proceeded.

It was 9 a.m. when I reached the bride's house and a spacious shed covering most of the courtyard had already been put up. It had a heavy covering of brilliant green sal leaves which kept off the morning sun. The bridegroom and his party had arrived the previous evening and were putting up in a neighbouring house.

The parties now began to assemble and a little later, the boy was carried in, sitting on the hips of his maternal uncle. He was 'shown' to the shed for a little, while a yoke, grinding stone and rolling pin were put in place. His uncle then released him and he slipped into the room where the girl was waiting, surrounded by the women folk of both the parties.

Two little girls then came in—one of them with a white straw pad and four long white *kajur* chains dangling from her shoulders and the other with a haldi-coloured pad and yellow chains. Each carried a small pitcher of water. Some mango twigs were put in the two pots—one to represent the girl's party and the other the boy's. The yoke, grinding stone and pin were then arranged—the yoke facing east, with the grinding stone in front of it and the pin in front of the stone.

All was now ready for the rites, and a moment later, the bridegroom was carried in by his uncle while the bride was borne in by this boy's brother. The bridegroom was put down with his heels on the yoke and toes on the stone while the girl stood on the grinding stone just in front of him. Both of them faced east.

A paddy-draped pitcher with some life-and-death tree blossom and some urid seeds in the lid was then brought in and put down

by the rolling-pin. The bride's father's brother poured some oil on the urid and arranged two country wicks like a curving cross. A little brand was brought and four small flames shot up. Another pitcher with lighted wicks and scarlet marks was put down by the stone, and with the arrival of a mat, the stage was set. All the while, the little girls stood stiffly by holding the pitchers on their heads.

The central rites then began. The girl squatted down on the mat to the left of the bridegroom and her bhauji crouched to support her. The hair of each was smoothed with oil and parted and a long strand was drawn down the forehead to the nose. A mango leaf was taken and some oil poured down from another leaf. From the leaf, the oil trickled slowly down the strand of hair. When this was over, the two were screened with a cloth and each put some scarlet powder on the other's forehead. Two of the girl's bhaujis picked up the two pitchers and simultaneously the drums started up and marriage songs began. The bride mounted the grinding stone, the boy stood behind her on the yoke and after his party had screened them with a cloth, the two bhaujis sprinkled them with mango twigs and deftly tipped the two pots of water down them. As the water splashed, the bride and bridegroom made a frantic dash for safety, and plunged into a room.

The bride's mother and aunt and the bridegroom's mother then formed up for a dance of the *samdhis*. A girl from the boy's party took up the yoke and straddled it on her shoulder. The bride's elder sister poised the grinding stone on her head while two other girls raised the pitchers. The three *samdhis* then linked up and swung round in a little dance, their old faces bursting with smiles while the four girls moved slowly in the centre stretching out their haunches. Every now and again, a girl would bash her haunches into those of another and as the dance got jollier, it became a game in which the protruding buttocks of each girl were the object of a calmly swinging attack. The dance closed with the three old women bearing in on the girls, and as they circled them, they rammed their thighs and bellies into their hips.

When the *samdhis* and girls had laughingly broken off, there was a lull in the ceremonies. Some of the men struck up marriage songs, a hookah was circulated and some country cigarettes were handed round. The husband of the bride's eldest sister started to serve some, rice-beer, and a little later, the girl herself came out. She had taken off the scarlet powder and went round saluting the elders and giving them rice-beer.

The bridegroom then returned from a brief courtesy visit to a house in the village and a formal round of salutation ensued—the boy and girl filing round with the bridegroom's brother and the girl's brother's wife and younger sister.

The songs went on until the midday meal was ready and after that, there was desultory talk and rest until the evening. At 9

o'clock however there was a regathering of the parties and at about 10 o'clock, they came out in separate groups on to the road and began to bear down on each other.

The girls in the boy's party swung round in the dance with the boys drumming in the middle, a girl oscillating with a lighted pitcher, and the bridegroom riding on a girl. Simultaneously, the girls in the girl's party moved slowly towards them, swinging round and lustily singing, the men drumming, a girl swinging with a lighted pitcher, and the bride riding on a boy. The parties got nearer and nearer, and now they were colliding and the ranks opened and the boy and girl riding on their mounts swung round into the circle. The dancing became riotous. The rows of girls swung round with excited smiles. The drummers whirled the drums above their heads. The girl carrying the bridegroom made way for a man; and for the next hour there was a succession of mounts—one carrying until he was tired and then making over to another. As the boy and girl sat astride the hips of their mounts, they were carried into the singing and swaying throng and a robust 'booms-a-daisy' ensued—the boy's mount crashing the boy's buttocks against the girl's, and cannoning off her. The girl sat discreetly on her succession of mounts—her legs glued to the hips of the man and her haunches pressing through her clothes. While the drums beat and the girls swung round and round, two old women moved on the fringes, dancing separately, wagging their bodies to and fro and pushing their bellies against the buttocks of the girls. Sometimes they postured before a drummer and caught the drum. Sometimes they clasped a drummer from behind while the drums beat on and the singing sounded through the night. Somewhat later, the boy and girl left their mounts and joined the lines of dancers, swinging like boys in the curving rhythms. As it neared midnight, pauses appeared in the dancing and gradually the drumming petered out and the men and women, the boys and girls, went off to bed.

The next morning, the bride left for Kapurdega with her husband.

II

The second wedding took place two days later in Umra, Khe-khratoli p.s. Palkote. It was a 'fashionable' wedding between two Dudh Kharia families both of whom were highly well-to-do, and this was one of the reasons why non-traditional rites were used. The bridegroom was Ghasia, son of Ratia Kharia of Dumardia four miles to the north-east and the bride was Sani, daughter of Bhairo Pahan. The negotiations had started in January 1940 and had ended in March.

It was a waterish morning after a stormy night and pools of water were lying about in the fields. In Sani's house, a large booth of sal and bamboo poles had been put up, and the courtyard had been sprinkled with sand. In the centre of the

booth were springs of mango, bamboo shoots, a branch of mahua and a branch of *sidha*.

When we arrived, it was 6 a.m., and the men and boys of the village were standing on a rock outside the house while four Kharia boys were putting on their dancing gear in the courtyard. The gear made a brave sight with its turban, jacket, ankle bells, sword and shield and a pair of shaggy shoulder-guards of yak's hair. A trumpet was squealing and there was desultory drumming from three Ghasis.

At last the dancers were ready and heading a procession of about a hundred men and women, they went down the village street in a prancing warlike line, dancing the *paiki*.

I went along with them and as we came down the path towards the spring, we saw Ghasia's party moving towards us across the paddy fields. Ghasia and his bestman were sitting on ponies with umbrellas over their heads, while a line of six *paiki* dancers supported by drummers advanced on the village with warlike gestures.

With a great thunder of drums, the two opposing bands bore down on each other—strutting with brandishing swords, jingling their ankle bells and shaking the yak's hair on their shoulders. Nearer and nearer they came until suddenly with a flurry of drums they merged in each other and formed a single dance. For half an hour, there was 'show' dancing—the dancers pairing off for private combats, whirling their swords, squatting and turning, prancing back to back, somersaulting and building towers of forms.

When the first fury was over, the procession moved up to Sani's house. On getting there Ghasia halted his pony and was given a handful of rice. Presently, Sani with her face covered was carried out and as soon as he saw her, Ghasia threw the rice at her. Sani threw a handful of rice at Ghasia, and was whirled back into the house while Ghasia and his bestman rode off to stable their ponies. When we entered the marriage booth, we found a mat with two stools and two brass pots. In front of it were little dishes of *dub* grass and ghee, a basket of arwa rice, a small pitcher of karani oil, a tall lamp and a pitcher of paddy. A little to the east was the central post and beyond this a grinding stone, yoke and a rolling pin. Around the lamp and the pitcher of paddy was twined a cotton thread.

When everything was ready, Ghasia was carried in by his best man and taken three times round the central post. When he had been placed on the mat, the girl was carried in by her bridesmaid and also did the round three times. She was then put down on Ghasia's left and sat huddled in front of her two bridesmaids. Another cloth was brought in and carefully swathed round her so that the head and body were completely hidden. The feet of the bride and bridegroom were then washed from the same dish and a youngish man, specially deputed for the ceremony, sprinkled them with mango twigs and *dub* grass and commenced the bridal recita-

tion. He dabbed a little ghee on the central post and the pot of paddy and dropped a little ghee on the fire. Gongs clashed and a conch blared out a sinister and melancholy blast. Bracelets of dub grass were then tied on the right wrists of the bride and bridegroom and a cotton thread was passed through the smoke and put on the girl's head. The young priest directed the middle finger of Ghasia's right hand, dipped it in ghee, dabbed it on the central post and pot, again dipped it in ghee and then dropped some ghee into the fire. He did the same with Sani. The grinding stone was now pulled up. Ghasia's wrap was tied to Sani's sari and they both stood on the stone. They were then screened with a cloth. Water was sprinkled with mango twigs and the little finger of Ghasia's left hand was dipped in ghee and guided to Sani's forehead by two of the attending men. Sani then did the same thing and the women with shy subdued voices began to sing marriage songs.

Three pice, two kesaili nuts and one life-and-death tree blossom were now brought out and placed on the grinding stone while a small conical wad of cotton was soaked in oil, put on a brass tray and lit. The bride and bridegroom were then shrouded in a single cloth, and both took up the tray with the burning wad. Guided by the priest, they bowed low five times. The central post and pot were again dabbed with ghee. Ghee was again dropped in the fire and they then walked slowly round the central pole three times. The bridegroom now kicked the pice, nuts and flower off the grinding stone and one of the bridesmaids waved some rice over the heads of the couple, sprinkled it on them and lightly touched their toes, shoulders and head.

The father of the boy then embraced the girl's father, picked him up and swung him round saluting the gathering, and with this gesture the rites ended. The following day, the bride left for Ghasia's home.

III

The most obvious way in which the second wedding differed from the first was its strangely puritan atmosphere. A peaceful solemnity hung over it. There was scarcely any singing. There was no dancing by the women. There was no rice-beer. It had the prime politeness of a middle class wedding in England. Even the paiki dancing was more decorative than alive—a mercenary exhibition of acrobatics rather than a rush of the legs.

If I were to summarise the differences I should say that the first wedding was a vivid diagram or in Dalton's phrase 'a public recognition of the consummation of the marriage.' The second was a mechanical contract, a shrinkage from all that has so far given Kharia life its sense and zest.

THE MUTHUVANS OF TRAVANCORE

BY L. A. KRISHNA IYER

THE Muthuvans are found on the Cardamom Hills, the Kannan Devan Hills, in the Anjanad Valley, Mannankandom, Anakulam, and Pooyamkutty of Thodupuzha Taluq. They were returned in the Census of 1931 as 1,301 of whom 649 were males and 652, females.¹ On the Cardamom Hills, their hamlets are in the midst of the Vellala, Goundan, and Chetty Cardamom ryots on whom they partially rely for their subsistence. Though they are removed from the stress and strain of the outside world and preserved many of their pristine customs and manners, they appear to have been corrupted by their contact with the cardamom ryots to some extent.

The Muthuvan habitat is on an altitude of 3,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level. The average rainfall varies from 100 inches in Poopara to 160 inches in Kunjiar and Deviar Valley. As they live above fever level, they look hale and hearty. They are nomadic agriculturists.

Tradition has it that they originally came from Madura to Travancore and settled down in different parts of the Cardamom Hills. In his *Races of Man*, Deniker states that the hill-men of the Anamalai Hills (the Malayan, the Kadars, and the Muthuvans) and those inhabiting the Travancore and Cochin Hills belong to the uncivilised Dravidians, but modern anthropologists do not agree with this view. Dr Keane points out that there is good evidence to prove that the first arrivals in India were a black people most probably Negritos, who made their way from Malayasia round the Bay of Bengal to the Himalayan foothills and thence spread over the Peninsula without ever reaching Ceylon.² Thrust back by the migrations of invaders from the plains, these aborigines took refuge in the recesses of the hills and came to be known as Pre-Dravidians. Dr Keane says that the Negritos have been absorbed or largely assimilated by later intruders, and as of these, there are four separate stocks, we call the Negritos the 'submerged fifth.' Looking into the Sanskrit literature of the past, we find ample confirmation of this view. The Epic and Puranic legends contain accounts of the physical characteristics of the aborigines. They are described as having a dark skin, short stature, and broad nose. The Muthuvans fit in with the above description. They are short in stature with an average of 61.4 inches. They are long-headed with an average cephalic index of 73.8. They have a short flat nose, the average nasal index being 88.4. Their complexion varies from dark to dark-brown. They enjoy a better physique than most other tribes.³

The Muthuvans offer to some extent an example of a natural family. A tract of a few miles square forms the jurisdiction of

1 Kunjan Pillai, *The Travancore Census, Report, for 1931 Part II*, p. 158.

2 L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Vol. I, pp. 1-2.

3 L. A. K. Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, pp. 3-4.

a small group of families, the members of which, besides making their living by hunting, fishing, gathering honey, and the like have advanced a step further than the Malapantarams in that they have taken to nomadic agriculture. Their life in high forest has fostered the growth of communal life. The joint clearing of land for cultivation, the existence of dormitories for the unmarried young, the participation of all the village folk in funeral ceremonies, and the existence of a village council for the adjudication of village disputes bear ample evidence of the fact that the Muthuvans still appreciate the advantages of communal life. The bonds of clanship are strong among the Muthuvans. The children of a man take after the clan of the mother. The debts of children are a charge not on their father, but on their uncle. Similarly, a man's debts are inherited by the nephew. A needy member of a clan is helped by his fellow clansmen, so much so pauperism is absent.

Blood tests were made in Travancore among the Muthuvans in 1939. They yielded the following result.

	No.		O		A		B		AB	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Muthuvan	89	17	19.1	38	42.7	28	31.5	6	6.7	

It is observed that there is a greater concentration of Group A than of Group O among the Muthuvans than any other tribe in India barring the Paniyan. The higher percentage of Group A among the Malers is said to be due to inbreeding in the locality.¹ The same cause may operate among the Muthuvans also. The following table will show in proper perspective the position of the Muthuvan with reference to other tribes in Travancore and elsewhere.—

Tribe		No.	O	A	B	AB
Kanikkar	..	211	52.2%	18.4%	29.8%	.5%
Pulayan	..	280	44.3%	24.3%	31.1%	.3%
Muthuvan	..	89	19.1%	42.7%	31.5%	6.7%
Kadar (Macfarlane)	..	50	48.0%	30.0%	9.0%	12.3%
Paniyan (Ayyappan)	..	250	20.0%	60.0%	7.6%	10.0%
Hill-Maler (Sarkar)	..	139	46.7%	15.8%	31.6%	5.7%

It may be seen that the Kanikkar have a larger concentration of O than any other Indian tribe, and Muthuvan, the lowest. The occurrence of O is about the same among the Paniyan and the Muthuvan, as they are found in about the same altitude in Wynad

¹ S. S. Sarkar, *Blood Grouping Investigation in India*, T. B. I (XII).

and Travancore respectively. The concentration of Group A is greater in the Muthuvan than any other South Indian tribe barring the Paniyan among whom it is at its highest. The percentage of Group B is about the same in all the Travancore tribes and the Hill Malers, and stands high.

Evidence of blood-grouping tests goes to show that in low country Travancore and Cochin tribes there is a greater preponderance of Group O than Group A and they appear to be of the same stock as the Australians. Barring the Muthuvan and the Paniyan who are found on higher altitudes, the Kanikkar, the Pulaya, the Kadar and the Hill-Maler exhibit a larger percentage of O and veer towards the Australians. The South Indian tribes show that Group B is high among the Travancore tribes varying between 29.8% and 31.5%. This may be due to the fact that miscegenation has been at work among the Muthuvan as a result of contact with the Cardamom ryots in the High Ranges.

The primitive tribes of Travancore are long-headed. A comparative statement of their average stature, cephalic index, and nasal index and the percentage of blood-groups is given below.

Tribe	Avg. Ht.	Avg. C.I.	Avg. N. I.	O	A	B	AB
Kanikkar ..	153.42	74.0	89.91	52.2%	18.4%	29.8%	.0%
Pulayan ..	153.47	74.9	84.52	44.3%	24.3%	31.1%	1.1%
Muthuvan ..	155.29	72.5	88.71	19.1%	42.8%	31.5%	6.7%
Paniyan ..	157.4	72.9	89.8	20.0%	60.0%	7.6%	10.0%

It may be observed that the Muthuvans and the Paniyans who are found on higher altitude are taller than the low country tribes, the Kanikkar and the Pulaya. This may be due to the more vigorous functioning of the pituitary gland at higher elevations. Evidence is also seen of a dark-skinned, short, platyrrhine type changing as a result of contact metamorphosis. The broad type of nose of the primitive tribes is their striking characteristic. The physical configuration of the country, the vast stretches of fever-haunted jungles, and the absence of roads protect them from the intrusion of foreign influence. Where races with different nasal proportions are intermixed, the index marks the degree of crossing that has taken place.¹ The nasal index of the Muthuvan, Kanikkar, and the Paniyan is higher than that of the Pulayas. The first three retain their more basic characters and have been less open to the inroads of low countrymen than the Pulaya who has undergone greater change as a result of contact metamorphosis.

Of the first racial stock, we are told that blood-group data and physical measurements testify to a relation between the Paniyans, Kanikkar, and the Chenchus of South India with the Malers of Bihar.

¹ L. A. K. Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. III, p. 19.

The Paniyans have the shortest stature, broadest nose, and the highest percentage of A and the lowest of B. The Chenchus run closer to the Paniyans with respect of blood-groups than any tribes he examined with less of B than Group A.¹ The Muthuvan stands closer to the Paniyan in point of stature, cephalic index, and nasal index than any other tribe in Travancore. Blood-tests also show that the Paniyans are closer to the Muthuvans in the distribution of Groups O and A, but the Muthuvan has a larger percentage of Group B (31.5%) than the Paniyan (7.6%). The large percentage of Group B among the Muthuvans appears to be due to miscegenation with Cardamom ryots in the High Ranges in Madura. The Travancore tribes bear evidence of greater miscegenation.

The Proto-Australoid is found in its purest form in the Veddahs, Muthuvans, Malavetans, the Kanikkar, the Irulas, and other tribes of Ceylon and South India. A comparison of the measurements of the Travancore tribes with the Veddahs and the Australians shows that the shape of the head and face, form of hair, and skin colour are essentially alike, though the Australians are taller and have absolute dimensions of head.

Tribe				Cephalic index	Nasal index	Height
Australian	..	..	..	73.0	..	162.5
Veddah	..	..	..	73.5	84.0	157.5
Paniyan	..	..	..	72.9	89.8	157.4
Muthuvan	..	..	..	72.5	88.7	155.3
Kanikkar	..	..	..	74.2	89.6	152.9
Pulayan	..	..	..	74.9	84.9	153.4

It may be observed that the Veddah and the Paniyan are closer to the Australian than the Travancore tribes. Blood-group data may be correlated with physical characters. There is an under-current of thought that the purer a tribe, the shorter should it be in stature and the more pronounced its chamaerhiny. The shortest and the smallest are the Indian tribes. It may be assumed that the Travancore tribes retain the more basic characters, though they all belong to the same stock.

1 A. K. Mitra, and B. K. Chatterji, 'Dravidian and Mon-Khmer speakers, Pre-Australoids', *Indian Culture*.

NOTES AND QUERIES

A KOND SORCERER

On 4 March 1946 there were tried in the Court of the Agency Sessions Judge, Chatrapur, four Konds for the murder of Kdali, a supposed sorcerer. They were found guilty and all were sentenced to transportation for life.

The prosecution story was that Kdali was not only capable of the routine treatment and cure of disease, but that he also had the power of turning himself into a tiger and in this form destroying cattle and human beings. One of the accused attributed the death of a bullock to his actions; a second lost a child, the third a bullock, the fourth a son. Kdali denied these charges but let it be known that though he was innocent in these particular instances, he could have caused the trouble had he wanted to. He said that he confined his operations to the Bokakia area of Kalahandi State and suggested that probably it was the sorcerers there who had been retaliating by causing the deaths in Taparangia and other villages in the Ganjam District.

A meeting was held at Taparangia and after the usual debate it was decided that Kdali should go to Bokakia and arrange with the sorcerers there to confine their activities to their own locality. The accused escorted him on his way, and after a time returned and told his family that he had gone away to Rangoon. But the corpse was discovered in a stream that very day. In Court the accused stated that they killed Kdali because he used to assume the form of a tiger and devour cattle and children.

The Sessions Judge said at the end of his judgment, 'I am bound to say that I feel some doubt as to the propriety of the I. P. C. to this case. It seems to me that accused looked upon Kdali as something less than a fellow human being and as a real menace to the life of their community. For this reason, I should, if I could have found any way of doing so, have passed a much lighter sentence.'

V. E.

In *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley* (p. 40), Hivale describes an inferior branch of the Potta clan which originated when the clan ancestor accidentally ate the placenta of his own child. His wife had gone to the jungle for wood and on her way back had given birth to a child under a tree. She left the placenta unburied and returned home. The husband, who had been out on a profitless hunt, passed the place and seeing on the ground what he supposed to be a bit of meat, cooked and ate it. A similar incident accounts for the separation of the Mahali Mundas from the Rompat Mundas and the Hos. 'The elder son of the original Munda couple, when still a child, having in the absence of his parents found the bit of cord fallen, after healing, from the navel of his baby brother mistook it for some kind of meat and roasted and ate it. . . . Another version of this story refers it to the time when both brothers were already married. They were on a journey, the younger ahead, when the latter's wife became a mother. A piece of the umbilical cord left on the spot, was found by the elder brother and his family when in their turn they passed there. Thinking it was a piece of the guts of some animal killed by their relatives, they cooked and ate it.' (J. Hoffmann and A. van Emelen, *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, Vol. ix, pp. 2756 f.)

Does anyone know of similar legends in other tribes to account for an inferior status of a clan or moiety?

V. E.

SARAT CHANDRA MITRA

Sarat Chandra Mitra, who was a lecturer in anthropology for some years in the University of Calcutta, died in 1938. He was a voluminous writer, but his articles, of which there were at least 662, are scattered through the pages of many journals and to-day can only be studied with difficulty. He had 362 articles in *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, 127 in *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, 37 in *The National Magazine*, 24 in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 21 in *The Hindustan*

Review, 12 in *The Journal of the Department of Letters*, 45 in *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, and 34 in *Man in India*. So far as I know, none of these have ever been collected, but an attractive book of folklore might be made by a student willing to explore and select 40 or 50 of the best of these studies. I specially commend S. C. Mitra's work on Bird and Plant Myths.

V. E.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Madras July 16.—The need for a religious approach to the study of science in general and botany in particular was stressed today by Mr Rajagopalachari delivering the inaugural address of the Presidency College Botany Association.

Mr Rajagopalachari said that just as there were logical and psychological ways of approaching the secrets of the universe, there was also the botanical way. The botanical way was the most interesting and effective method of realizing the mysteries of the universe and God, its Creator. The science of botany should be studied with a religious insight if they wanted real benefit from it.

Mr Rajagopalachari said that our ancestors who were above all anthropomorphists and were prepared to concede the existence of God in any form, had understood fully the universe and the evolution of mankind. The present day students of botany with the latest scientific instruments should be able to go forward more speedily in their researches.—A.P.I.

REVIEWS

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, *The Reddis of the Bison Hills*, xvii and 373 pages, 84 plates, 5 maps. Macmillan & Co., London, 1945. Price, Rs. 20.

THIS ATTRACTIVELY put up and superbly illustrated volume is an example of the *Government of H. E. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad*. There are few books on Indian anthropology which show such wealth of photographic material so elegantly displayed, and which show on the part of the authors a greater sympathy for the culture of the tribe under description. The gifted couple have lived for a period of several months among the Konda (Hill) Reddis and have by their frequent visits to the festivals and sympathetic contact collected a mine of valuable information. Dr Haimendorf is a trained anthropologist and before he came to Hyderabad had to his credit not only systematic training and a degree in Europe but also important work in the Assam Hills. His fine literary style, and a keen appreciation of the problems of cultural assimilation, provide a refreshing contrast to the dry-as-dust descriptions of the usual field workers in anthropology. Dr Haimendorf's special interest in problems of acculturation and the impact of the (so-called) progressive populations on people in primitive stages of development, has indeed led to fruitful results. It is hoped that his plea for concerted action for a general survey of the aboriginal races and cultures in India will not fall on flat ears. The Hyderabad State has already done pioneer work and the creation of a separate 'Anthropological Survey of India' by the Government of India bids fair to brighten the future for anthropological studies. But it is equally urgent that such studies should not be confined to merely a record of culture traits but secure the collection of impersonal, and objective data of physical, sociological and psychological (e.g., intelligence testing by pictorial tests). The progress of civilization is to be judged with reference to certain physical standards at the end of say every 10 or 15 years, the methods of modern physical anthrometry are likely to be most useful. Let us hope that in future monographs on this subject, this aspect of cultural life of the tribes will not be lost sight of e.g., it is preferable to specify the exact differences in physical conditions rather than depend upon vague personal remarks of individual observers.

Dr Haimendorf has eminently succeeded in his task of giving a faithful picture of the culture and the daily life of the Reddis. J. P. Mills in his foreword describes the Reddis as not only older than the Dravidians, but as belonging to 'a culture stratum' which even antedates that the Neolithic Austro-Asiatics who form such an important element in the primitive tribes as far South as the Godavari. 'Whatever may have been at the back of the mind of J. P. Mills when he wrote this, the author clearly states at p. 25 that 'no traces of Neolithic culture has as yet been found from the immediate vicinity of any of the three regions in which the Reddis live.' The three regions are:—The *Godavari* region, embracing the villages on the river bank, as well as in the immediate neighbourhood to the north and these in the whole of the hilly country south of the river—all situated in the extreme eastern corner of the Hyderabad territory; the *Northern Hills area* where there are numerous scattered and frequently shifted settlements of the Reddis; and the *Rampa Country* of lower hills and broad valleys. The latter two regions are in British India and are governed by different system through the hereditary mattadar or feudal chiefs. The aboriginal hill-tribe Reddis have nothing to do with the Hindu caste—Reddis, who are farmers and traders and have no connection with the hill-tribes.

The author is of opinion that these Hill Reddis have always resisted the influence of the Austro-Asiatic races, as well as the contact of Buddhistic culture which brought stupas and viharas in the neighbouring Rajahmundry Taluqa, as also of the Hindu Chola kings (1022-62) who selected Rajahmundry as the capital. None of the characteristic features of the life of the Austro-Asiatic people—the shouldered stone-celt, rice cultivation on terraced and irrigated fields, the art of weaving, the keeping of cattle for purposes of slaughter and sacrifice, and the creation of megalithic monuments in the shape

of menhirs, stone-circles, and dolmens, are observable among the Reddis. The author describes Reddis and Dires as belonging to a stratum of primitive semi-nomadic shifting-cultivators, who have not yet developed an agriculture sufficiently advanced to support a complex social and cultural structure and support permanent settlements.

The Reddi villages are small or is the number of houses, mentioned in most of the villages in Appendix II, varies from 2 to 9 only. No rigid social organisation which could hamper personal freedom of the individual is possible but the festivals and ceremonies connected with (1) food gathering either by the digging-sticks or hand-fishing; (2) food cultivation—production *i.e.* shifting cultivation or forest growth; (3) ceremonies for first crop eating or mango crop or other sacrificial offerings—bring together the people of the neighbouring villages and thus establish social contact, among people otherwise accustomed to live in isolation.

As a result of the contact with the Hindu contractors and other persons, the Reddis in the Godavari valley have begun to practice child marriage and have accepted numerous outside gods or goddesses. Yet the Reddi women are not meek, docile, or dependent. When in the house, at work or at leisure, at meal times, at public functions and dances, men and women behave as if both had exactly the same social status and neither excelled in importance or demanded a greater measure of respect and consideration. A menstruating woman is impure and when she reaches this stage for the first time, a small hut or leaf shelter is built for her at some distance from the house where she must sleep and eat till her period is over. The actual marriage ceremony also reminds one of the Hindu custom of tying a silver or gold locket (mangal sutram) round the neck of the bride; but here the village barber performs the ceremony after anointing the couple with oil and spraying with water. The couple are made to hold grain in their hands which they throw at each other. Similarly the use of turmeric paste for smearing the corpse as a part of funeral ceremony, gives an important clue, to the origin of the use of turmeric and its red variant kumkum, in Hindu religious ceremonies. The various customs and rites of the tribe including homicide practices *e.g.*, first eating ceremony, the mango crop ceremony, Veju—the magician doctor, who diagnose disease and removes it by pacifying the god or goddesses that caused it, are faithfully described by the authors in great detail. The book is almost cyclopaedic in its scope and covers almost every facet of the cultural life of the Reddis. But as the author emphasises, the main theme of the book is to record the effect of the culture contact in the economic and social field and some space may be devoted to this aspect in this review.

It is a well-known and well accepted dictum that the aboriginal tribes which are backward should not be subjected to the rigours of the same criminal and civil laws as the people in ordinary rural areas. The aborigines deserve to be given the same opportunities for self-development and progress as other communities, but while they are encouraged to develop their own tribal institutions their march towards the further progress should not be hindered by such institutions. Village panchayats with widening powers of civil and criminal jurisdiction, with powers of appointing their village patwaris and patels, etc. etc. should inspire both confidence and self-advancement. The ultimate aim should be not to maintain or retain scheduled areas permanently as such but slowly prepare them to come in a line with the general progress of the country. Every inch of soil is required for increasing production of food, fruits, forest produce and if India is to attain a place among the self-supporting nations of the world, the 23 millions of its aborigines should not be kept back; of course, those that are extremely backward and are in the grip of exploiters will need special consideration, just as special legislation is necessary to give relief from the sowcars and money lenders to the agriculturists all over the country. Already movement has taken place in this direction and where no legislation exists against the alienation of land from aboriginals to non-aboriginals, it should be undertaken without delay.

The author is generally for progress but his enthusiasm for 'self-reliance and the spirit' of the Reddis makes him favour the shifting *podu*-cultivation. His statement that 'the adoption of plough cultivation has by no means always economic advantages and they may serve as a warning to those who believe that aborigines can be benefited simply by being weaned from the axe and taught to plough. For once they have entered into competition with populations that possess experience of permanent cultivation and economic strife accumulated through countless centuries, they are bound to lose sooner or later both their land and their independence, unless special and effective provision is made against such an eventuality.' (page 187-288) 'Wherever I stayed in a hill-village, it struck me that the Reddis persisting in their old life as shifting cultivators and food gatherers seemed on the whole both healthier and happier than those who lived in the open country in symbiosis with Hindu castes or were settled on the Godavari banks and engaged in forest labour.' Though thus favouring shifting cultivation, the author is wise and shrewd enough to confess that 'it would be impracticable and futile to suggest that they should revert to their old and more primitive mode of life,' and that forest labour is the obvious and the easiest means by which a jungle-tribe can readjust a primitive economy to modern conditions and obtain cash to pay land revenue and purchase his increasing wants like salt, spices, substantial clothes, metal and glass ornaments etc., The raising of the standard of life in India in general and of aboriginal tracts in particular is as essential as it is urgent and no well-wisher of these tribes would deplore the circumstances that lead to such a rise.

The Reddis are, however, a tribe that has taken to modern culture kindly and as the author states 'some Reddis are already in Government employ as school masters and forest guards and there is one Reddi who has set up as a forest contractor and takes coupes in the East Godavari District' (page 322). The problems of adjustment and administration of these tribes are full of difficulties and dangers but given the will and the earnestness of purpose they can be all solved satisfactorily. Dr Haimendorf's proposals for formation of a co-operative society for the Reddis were considered by the Hyderabad State Forest Department as 'not practicable.' But the Swami of Parantapalli, who is the adviser and friend of the Reddis for the last twenty years, has arranged for the exploitation of forests on a co-operative basis by the Reddis themselves. The Reddi Patel of Parantapalli was shepherded by the Swami and was able to secure in an auction the bamboo coupe for Rs. 2,200. Under the Swami's supervision the work of exploitation of timber and bamboo was carried out strictly on co-operative lines. The sale of the bamboos produced Rs. 15,000 out of which after paying cash wages of Rs. 3,500 to the Reddis, and distributing grain, clothes, buffaloes, etc., to them at a cost of Rs. 7,300, and paying the usual duties and transport charges, there was a balance of Rs. 916. The effect of the scheme on the general atmosphere of the village has been remarkable. The Reddis who two years ago were little less than a few tattered rags, now possess dhotis and shirts and the women wear proper saris; they are evidently better fed and jawari has entirely replaced the pith of the *caryota* palm. The freedom from oppression and debt has made them more self-possessed and cheerful; they work now with the consciousness of reaping the full fruits of their labour.'

The author mentions favourably the attempt of the Swami to let the Reddis cultivate collectively one *podu*-field, but his efforts to control the use of palm-wine on the ground that it makes them lazy and violent do not find favour. 'The abstinence from palm-wine may increase the Reddis industriousness and prevent perhaps some drunken quarrels; but whether it has a beneficial effect on their health is open to question.' The reply can only be given not by general impression but by a statistical collection of information about the stamina and weight and health conditions which should in future be a part of the minimum equipment of social worker among these tribes.

Dr Haimendorf has spared no pains to make his monograph complete and comprehensive. A fine literary artist himself with a charming style we

must forgive him if he finds the songs of the Reddis dull and artless; perhaps pressure of other duties has left no time for condensation and avoidance of repetitions. His thoughtful suggestions for solutions of the problems of adjustment and administration of aborigines are likely to receive close attention at his own hands as the administrator of the backward areas. We hope that the lessons of the co-operative enterprise of the Swami of Parantapalli in liberating the Reddis from the tyranny of the timber merchants will be closely followed in other areas of the Hyderabad State, for it opens out a new field of work and outlook for those dejected anthropologists, who would suggest the isolation of the backward aborigines, and their methodical protection. We hope that in the third volume of the series contemplated by Dr. Haimendorf still more cheerful methods for protection and emancipation of the aborigines will be worked out.

P. G. S.

CHARULAL MUKHERJEA, *The Santals*. Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, 1943.

THE PUBLICATION of this book marks a welcome addition to the growing literature on the Santals, a people who have been strangely neglected hitherto by Indian anthropologists. The author is an 'amateur' in the subject, a fact which sufficiently accounts for both the merits and defects of his work. He calls himself an amateur with a hobby for journalism, but unlike some journalists he was persistent in his efforts to add knowledge to his enthusiasm; he was granted facilities for research by the authorities of Mayurbhanj State, where Santals form nearly one third of the population; and he received great encouragement from the late Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, who is named on the title page as the reviser of the work. All those who felt the spell of that gracious personality, of whom the present reviewer is one, will feel their hearts warm to the author as they read the heartfelt tribute to his *guru*, contained in the Preface.

The book is planned along the lines of the old style ethnological monograph, and the chapters range from one on 'Santal Genesis and Migration' to the last chapter on 'Civilization and the Santal.' The most valuable parts of the work are those based on the author's own researches in Mayurbhanj; for purposes of comparison he has drawn freely on the account of Santal Traditions published by the Rev. L. O. Skreftsrud more than seventy years ago. In some chapters, e.g., that on 'The Cycle of Santal Festivals,' the comparison would have been more pointed if it could have been made with present day practice in the Santal Parganas. As it is, the materials for such a comparison do not yet exist to any large extent; much work remains to be done.

The chapters on 'Social Fabric,' and 'Kingship Organization' will be found particularly useful for those who want to a general view, and will also be a help to students of the subject. To mention one minor point, the reviewer is interested to find on p. 77 a paragraph on clan signs which largely corroborates what he has noticed in the Bankura District. According to Boddington, the marks branded on cattle in the Santal Parganas are not related to the clan of the owner. In view of the fact that both in Mayurbhanj and in Bankura, the opposite is true, one wonders whether Boddington might have been misinformed on this point. Eleven folktales from Mayurbhanj are embodied in the book, but the section on poetry is disappointing. 'Sex Life of the Santal' forms the subject of an appendix. One gets the impression that the Santals are not very different from the rest of humanity in this respect. While it is true that 'sex and sin have not become interchangeable words to the Santal,' they have their standards of right and wrong, and their standards of reference, in matters pertaining to the relations between

The reviewer would like the record of verifiable data regarding prosperity and health of individuals kept by anthropometric tests.

men and women. It is strange to find 'A Note on hunting in Mayurbhanj' relegated to an appendix; although hunting is no longer important economically to the Santal, in most parts it still plays a very large part in the life of the tribe, and influences greatly its ideals of manhood. Possibly State policy is responsible for its relative eclipse in Mayurbhanj.

Two important omissions have struck the present reviewer, and should be mentioned. In the chapter on 'Economic Life,' there is hardly any reference to agricultural operations, or the conditions of land tenure under which they are carried out. For purposes of comparison we would have welcomed a full statement on these matters as they obtain in Mayurbhanj. Again, in the chapter entitled 'From Birth to Death,' there is curiously no reference to the ceremony by which Santals attain to full adult status within the tribe, the *Caco chatiar*. It is true that the importance of this ceremony would appear to have declined during the past seventy years; nevertheless, in West Bengal, no one who has not passed through it may be married, nor can the children of unmarried parents be admitted fully to the tribe. A case has come to the reviewer's notice where the parents of three children who had never been married, celebrated the form of marriage known as *Baha saoha*, and followed it by the *Caco chatiar* ceremony of their three children, in order that marriage arrangements for their eldest son might go forward. It was also an important vehicle for handing on the traditions of the tribe, which are dealt with in Mr Mukherjee's first chapter.

We understand that the author hopes to publish a companion volume in Bengali. We hope that he will receive every possible encouragement to proceed with his work, and be emboldened to rely more fully on firsthand descriptions of what he has seen for himself, even if this should reduce the scope of the work.

W. J. CULSHAW

SHAMRAO HIVALE, *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley*, With a Foreword by Verrier Elwin, xvi and 230 pages, 12 plates and 27 text illustrations. Oxford University Press, 1946, Price, Rs. 12-8.

ALEXANDER GOLDENWEISER quotes in his *Anthropology* the first and most important two commandments from a fieldworker's *vade mecum*: 1. Establish a *rapprochement* with the informant, so that he can reveal himself to you frankly; 2. Make him 'fall in love' with you. No one reading *The Pardhans* can fail to realize that consciously or unconsciously Shamrao Hivale has based his technique of investigation on these two commandments and that he has thereby succeeded admirably well in gaining the confidence of the tribesmen. The book is a masterpiece of ease and simplicity such as springs from an author's intimate familiarity with his subject; in its pages the Pardhans come to life and ethnological theory encroaches seldom on unpretentious, but extremely accurate, descriptions of the customs, customs and beliefs of one of Middle India's most interesting and most primitive peoples. Indeed as the description of a culture is an enquiry which with few questions as to whence or whither, *The Pardhans* stands in the front rank of Indian anthropological studies. Shamrao Hivale knows the Pardhans better than most people know their own community and almost every general statement is illustrated by concrete examples. A novel feature are the semi-fictional dialogues at the end of the book; in many ways they are more telling than the most elaborate accounts of the relations between the members of a household or a village can ever be, but any anthropologist tempted to adopt this method of vivid presentation, should remember that it is only Hivale's complete mastery of the tribal language and the many years of his intimate contact with the Pardhans which have enabled him to recreate conversations in authentic form.

Shamrao Hivale did not 'visit' the Pardhans in order to study and describe them, but he studied them because he happened to live and work among them, and this simple fact sets his book apart from the works of anthropolo-

gists of academic background. There are few to surpass him in the description of the intimate details of family life, in the delineation of the Pardhans' character and in reproducing the true village atmosphere. A few simple songs are found in their natural context, but in a book on a tribe of bards and minstrels a more substantial account of the Pardhans' traditional art would not have been out of place. The three epic songs of which Hivale gives a very readable poetic translation are of secular nature, and it would almost seem that among the Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley sacred myths, such as their fellow tribesmen of the Southern Central Provinces and the Deccan recite during the rites of their clan gods, play a comparably unimportant part. It is certainly significant that they do not even know the legend of the culture hero Lingo (p. 7).

Hivale subscribes to the common view that the Pardhans are a 'branch of the great Gond tribe.' But although today the Pardhans form an integral part of Gond society it seems extremely doubtful whether they and the Gonds have sprung from the same stock. The physical difference between the two people which Hivale fully recognizes, is hardly reconcilable with the theory of a common ancestry. Wherever we meet Pardhans (many of whom conform to the type described as 'Mediterranean' by Guha and by Eickstedt as 'Indid') they are of a more progressive physical make up than their Gond patrons, and it would seem that historical events have brought about a symbiosis and close cultural ties between two peoples of different origin and racial associations. Moreover the peculiar relationship between a Gond patrón and his Pardhan bard is not a unique phenomenon; many castes of present day Dravidian society have similar hereditary bards, which serve as a repository of tradition and are economically dependent on their patrons.

Today it may seem 'unthinkable that the Pardhans should exist apart from the Gonds' (p. 1) and the association between Gonds and Pardhans is indeed by no means a local development but extends over large parts of Gondwana from the Narbada to the lower course of the Godavari. Yet Maria and Muria Gonds seem to have no Pardhans, and it would therefore seem that only those Gonds who at sometime in their history came in contact with more highly developed civilizations adopted the institution of the hereditary bard. This may have coincided with the Rajput influence on the Gond kingdoms, but I think it more probable that the association of Gonds and Pardhans dates from the time when the undoubtedly pre-Dravidian Gonds came into the orbit of Dravidian culture and their old tribal tongues were ousted by the Dravidian dialects which in many parts both they and the Pardhans still speak. This Dravidianization of the tribal folks of Middle India, which preceded in many ways similar Aryanization of historical times, accounts probably for some of the traits which Gond culture shares with the earlier Hindu civilizations, *e.g.*, the feudal system, the exalted position of tribal chiefs styled 'raja' and most likely also the institution of the hereditary bards and chroniclers.

The fact that the Pardhans' clan organization is everywhere based on that of the local Gond does not disprove the different origin of the two people, for there are many examples of other tribes adopting their Gond neighbours system of phratries and clans. In Chanda District and in Hyderabad, for instance, not only the aboriginal Kolams, but even such non-aboriginal castes as certain Maratha blacksmiths and brass-founders have the same clan names as the Gonds.

In the Upper Narbada valley the phratry and clan system of the Gonds—and consequently also of the Pardhans—is obviously in a state of disintegration. Hivale did not find any clear grouping of the clans into phratries and the association of the individual phratries with certain numbers of 'gods' or divine ancestors, which is elsewhere the main criterion for the grouping of clans and phratries, seems to have largely fallen into oblivion. Clans which among the Gonds of the southern Central Provinces belong to different phratries and are associated with different numbers of 'gods' are in Dindori considered brother clans, belonging to the same exogamous unit. Some of

the traditions of individual clans show clearly the displacement of old ideas by modern influences. The well-known myth of the Here Kumra man, who performed a human sacrifice and when surprised by the victim's kinsmen was saved by the intervention of a god becomes a story of a goat-thief caught by the police. In the original myth the body of the human victim is turned into the carcass of a goat, whereas in the modern story of Dindori the goat's head is transformed into that of a pig.

Considerations of space forbid further comparisons between the customs and myths of the Pardhans described by Hivale and those found in other areas. While the function of the Pardhan is everywhere essentially the same, there are considerable local variations in customs and traditions, and the author was perhaps wise in giving us a straightforward picture of conditions in one area instead of overburdening his book with references to similarities as well as discrepancies in other localities.

The Pardhans is sure of a permanent and honoured place in the ethnographic literature of this country. I can only hope that Shamrao Hivale will one day add to his valuable contribution to Indian anthropology by writing a comprehensive monograph on the Gonds of Mandla,—a people of which we know a good deal through the writings of Elwin and Hivale, but which has not yet been the subject of a systematic study.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF



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